Will Eisner
BEST NEW SERIES
2017

"Amazing. Just flat-out amazing."
—PATTON OSWALT

# BLACK HAMMER™

JEFF LEMIRE DEAN ORMSTON

DAVID RUBÍN DAVE STEWART TODD KLEIN

"I don't read many comics these days, and I can't remember the last time I read a superhero comic, but I'm loving *Black Hammer*."

—**Mike Mignola (*Hellboy*)**

"At once an epic, gripping superhero mystery, and a heartfelt meditation on why superheroes matter, *Black Hammer* is easily one of Lemire's best creations."

—**Scott Snyder (*Batman*)**

"On my pull list by the time I got to page five."

—**Mark Waid (*Kingdom Come*)**

"*Black Hammer* is the maddest, most brilliant comic I've read in years."

—**Mark Millar (*Kick-Ass*)**

"Jeff Lemire's *Black Hammer* feels like it's walking two roads—one honoring the past of superhero comics, and one forging a path into the future of the genre."

—**Cullen Bunn (*Harrow County*)**

"*Black Hammer* feels like a superhero story through an *X-Files* lens; it's strange and melancholy and real. The tale evokes an immense world filled with typically deep Lemire-ian themes of isolation, joy and simplicity. I can't wait to see where he goes from here."

—**Charles Soule (*Letter 44*)**

"Jeff Lemire, one of the most gifted writers currently working in comics, has produced another powerhouse work with *Black Hammer*. Combining the country gothic feel of his own *Essex County* with the world of superheroes, the end result is something truly fresh, exciting and fun. I need more now!"

—**James Robinson (*Starman*)**

"Lemire and Ormston give us a cast of amazing and strange characters that leap off the page with emotion and mystery. It's a world I can't wait to dive into every month!"

—**Peter J. Tomasi (*House of Penance, Superman*)**

"Jeff Lemire is one of those rare writers that understand how to hook readers in just a few pages. He outdid himself with *Black Hammer*, taking us to a lonely, somewhat barren farm, where a group of characters is marking their tenth anniversary of living there. In very short order, we come to understand that their current state of existence, which is frustratingly mundane to a few of them, is the result of a previous adventure and sacrifice elsewhere. The farm is more prison than home. Some have adapted, some have not, and those different reactions fuel the engine of what is obviously a compelling story."

—**Dan Jurgens (*Action Comics, Batman Beyond*)**

# BLACK HAMMER™

# BLACK HAMMER™

## LIBRARY EDITION VOLUME 1

### SECRET ORIGINS & THE EVENT


WRITTEN BY **JEFF LEMIRE**
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UNLESS OTHERWISE NOTED.

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BLACK HAMMER™


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# INTRODUCTION

Aftermath stories are the most terrible, beautiful things.

The story ends, but the lives of the survivors of the story don't. Even if, as in this case, everyone thinks they died.

This is what captured me about *Black Hammer*. It's an aftermath story set in a shadowed afterlife, one that was quickly and imperfectly sketched out by a panicky, hurried god. An afterlife with all the faulty logic and broken physics of the pulp story they passed from. And yet also with the dark textures of a real life that none of them ever knew. Heaven is a lifeless farm right out of a Bela Tarr film, and a small town that reeks of all the miserable sticky truths of all small towns, and a wall all around it that will kill you all over again if you try to climb it.

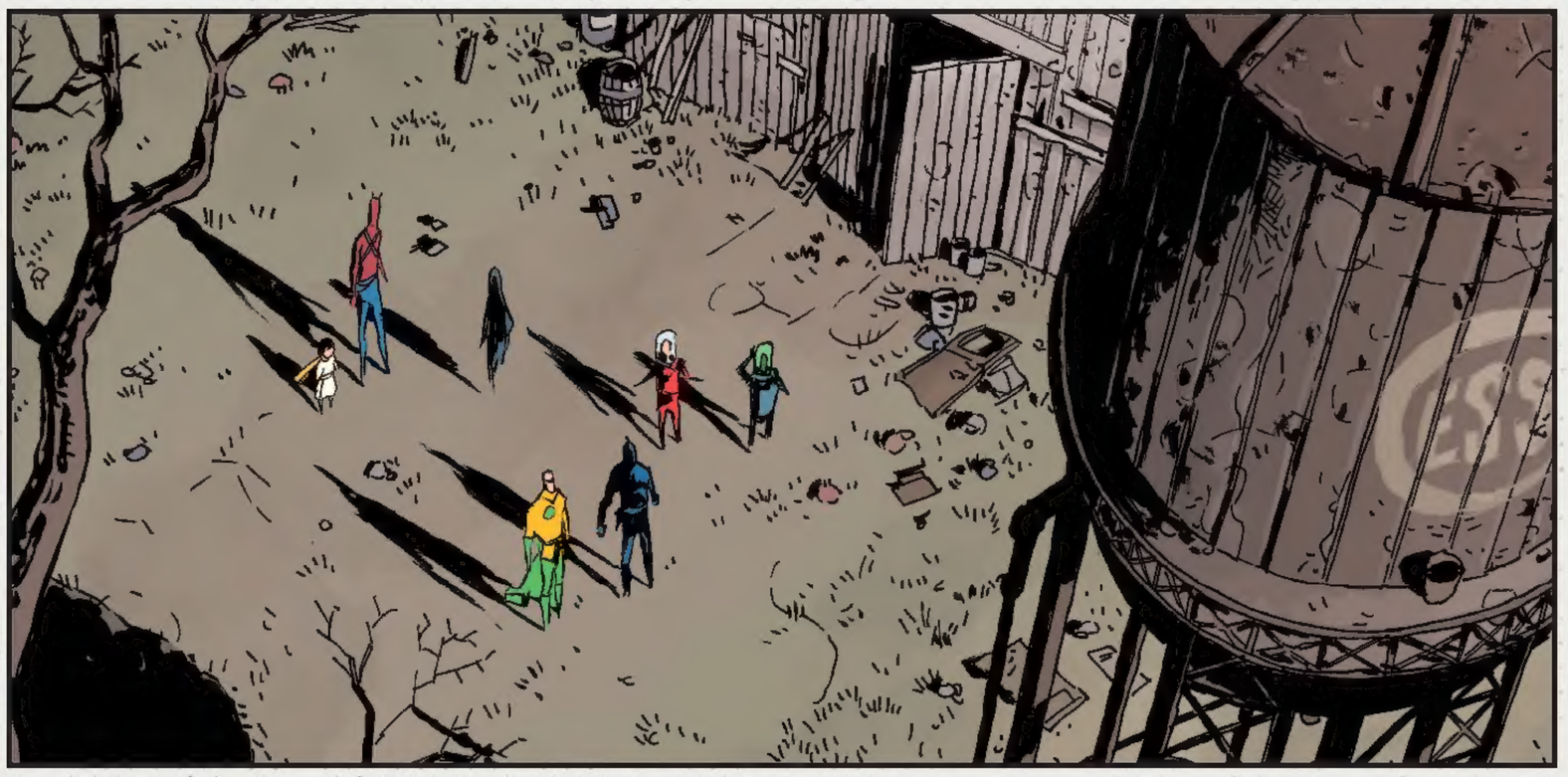
All of these people are sourced from times in superhero fiction before the characters came equipped for our modern world. There's none of Moore, Miller, or Morrison's knowing urban psychologies, or even Liefeld and Lee's neurotic, violent dynamism. There's one funny call-out to Liefeld-era character design that speaks directly to these being people from eras where adventures and talents did not come with depression and suicide attempts. That might actually be the most heartbreaking thing, for these people. They've been exiled to something very much like a real world.

There used to be a slug line used on comics covers in the seventies, the era from which Black Hammer himself is drawn: *Trapped in a World He Never Made!*

Dean Ormston has always been great. I've had Jeff Lemire's *Underwater Welder* on my shelf since it came out. Together, they make a terrible, beautiful thing.

I hope you enjoy discovering the houses of secrets and mystery that are *Black Hammer*, far more affecting and haunting than the sum of their parts, as much as I did.

Warren Ellis
England
June 2018



DARK HORSE COMICS®

Jeff Lemire ★ Dean Ormston ★ Dave Stewart

# BLACK HAMMER

No.1

ON

LOST!! MYSTERY FARM!!

:SIGH: WELL, TO TELL THE TRUTH, YOU GET USED TO THE PLACE. I NEVER THOUGHT I'D SAY THAT, BUT IT'S TRUE.

BLACK HAMMER

TEN YEARS TODAY SINCE WE ARRIVED. TEN YEARS!

SEEMS LIKE ONLY YESTERDAY, BUT TIME FLIES. AND THE OLDER YOU GET THE FASTER IT GOES. CLICHÉS, I KNOW. BUT GOD-DAMN IF THEY AREN'T TRUE.

MOOOO!

YOU SAID IT.

NOW, I SAY I GOT USED TO THIS PLACE, BUT THE TRUTH IS, IT DIDN'T TAKE MUCH. THIS MAY SOUND WEIRD, SINCE I GREW UP IN *THE CITY*, BUT FROM THE FIRST MOMENT WE SET FOOT ON THIS FARM, I FELT LIKE I'D *COME HOME*.

THERE'S JUST SOMETHING ABOUT THE AIR HERE. SEEMED SO FAMILIAR, *SO RIGHT* TO ME.

AS A KID I ALWAYS WISHED I LIVED IN THE COUNTRY. NEVER THOUGHT IT WOULD HAPPEN. BUT LIFE HAS A FUNNY WAY OF THROWING YOU A CURVE BALL WHEN YOU LEAST EXPECT IT. HEH. SEE, ANOTHER CLICHÉ.

I GREW UP IN THE EAST END. ROUGH PART OF TOWN. HELL, IT MADE ME WHO I AM, BUT I USED TO THINK I'D TRADE IT ALL FOR JUST A BIT OF *QUIET*... A BIT OF *SPACE*.

WELL, NOW I GOT IT IN SPADES. AND DESPITE ***EVERYTHING THAT HAPPENED,*** DESPITE ***EVERYTHING WE WENT THROUGH*** COMING HERE...

...MOST DAYS I WOULDN'T CHANGE IT FOR THE WORLD.

MORNING, GAIL.

ABRAHAM.

DIDN'T HEAR YOU COME IN LAST NIGHT.

SO?

SO, DID YOU *EVEN COME HOME* LAST NIGHT?

WHAT'S IT TO YOU WHAT I DO, ABE?

IT MATTERS TO *ALL OF US* WHAT YOU DO, GAIL. YOU KNOW THAT.

SPEAKING OF WHICH, YOU'RE WEARING TOO MUCH MAKEUP FOR A *GIRL YOUR AGE.*

FUCK OFF, ABE.

*AND* YOU SHOULDN'T BE SMOKING.

I *SAID,* FUCK OFF, ABE.

DO YOU HAVE TO DO THIS *TODAY*, GAIL? TODAY OF *ALL DAYS*?

:SIGH:

CREEAK

BOY, SOMETHING SMELLS GOOD!

JUST TAKE THOSE MUDDY BOOTS OFF BEFORE YOU COME IN THIS KITCHEN!

I AM, I AM.

YEP, MOST DAYS I WOULDN'T CHANGE IT FOR THE WORLD...

MORNING, FELLAS. LOOKS LIKE IT'S GONNA BE A NICE DAY OUT THERE.

GET YOUR FEET OFF THE TABLE, BARBALIEN!

BE QUIET AND GET ME SOME MORE BACON, OR I'LL COMPACT YOU LIKE THE TIN CAN YOU *ARE*, WALKY.

--fell past inverted stars and nothingness-- good morning, Abraham--but I was not alone. There were many in the infinite. Many and none...

MOST DAYS.

:SIGH:...

# WELCOME TO BLACK HAMMER

BROODING AGAIN, GAIL?

YEP. WANT TO JOIN ME?

DON'T MIND IF I DO. I COULD USE A GOOD BROOD.

DID ABE SEND YOU?

NO.

YOU SHOULD KNOW BY NOW THAT IF ABRAHAM WANTED ME TO DO SOMETHING, I'D DO THE OPPOSITE.

BUT YOU *ARE* GOING TO TRY TO CONVINCE ME TO COME TONIGHT, RIGHT?

ONLY IF YOU WANT TO.

HELL, I DON'T EVEN KNOW IF *I'LL* SHOW UP.

REALLY?

IT'S BEEN TEN YEARS SINCE WE WERE ***STRANDED HERE.*** SO WHAT SHOULD WE DO? CELEBRATE OR MOURN?

IF I'M GOING TO A PARTY, I'D AT LEAST LIKE TO KNOW THE THEME.

THE REAL QUESTION IS, WILL ***MOMMY DEAREST*** MAKE AN APPEARANCE?

OH GOD, I HOPE NOT. THEN IT REALLY WILL BE A FUNERAL.

YOU'RE CRUEL.

DO YOU STILL MISS IT, BARBIE?

"THE WAY IT WAS?"

OH, I DON'T KNOW. SOMETIMES. BUT THE WAY YOU MISS OLD FRIENDS YOU HAVEN'T SEEN IN YEARS. YOU KNOW THAT IF YOU WENT BACK, IT WOULDN'T BE THE SAME AS IT WAS.

I DON'T ACTUALLY MISS HOW THINGS WERE. I WAS A ***DIFFERENT PERSON*** THEN.

"I MEAN, REALLY, THE WHOLE THING WAS KIND OF SILLY, WASN'T IT? SOMETIMES I WONDER IF IT WAS REAL AT ALL, OR JUST SOME ***COLLECTIVE DREAM*** WE ALL WOKE UP FROM."

NO, I DON'T MISS OUR ***OLD LIFE***, GAIL. WHAT I DO MISS IS THE ***FREEDOM.***

I MISS BEING ABLE TO ***LEAVE.*** I MISS THE ***REST OF THE WORLD.***

WE ARE WHO WE ARE NOW, GAIL. WE ***CAN'T*** CHANGE THAT. HELL KNOWS WE'VE SPENT MOST OF THESE LAST TEN YEARS TRYING.

PERSONALLY, I ALWAYS LIKED YOU BETTER LIKE ***THIS*** ANYWAY.

I MISS HAVING TITS.

WHAT WOULD I DO WITHOUT YOU, BARBALIEN?

YOU'D BROOD ***ALONE.***

KZLT

AH, COLONEL WEIRD. I WASN'T SURE WE WOULD SEE YOU AGAIN TODAY.

Of course you'll see me, Talky-Walky. I'm right here.

THAT'S NOT WHAT I--

IT'S JUST, YOU'VE BEEN SPENDING MORE AND MORE TIME *AWAY*, THESE PAST WEEKS.

Yes, well-- there's more and more trouble in the *PARA-ZONE*. I must be ever vigilant.

Are you making yourself a mate, Walky?

A MATE?!

NO, COLONEL. IT'S A NEW PROBE. I'VE BEEN WORKING ON IT FOR MONTHS NOW--DON'T YOU REMEMBER?

A probe? Oh...yes. Of course.

I INTEND TO LAUNCH IT PAST THE PERIMETER OF THE TOWN SOON. JUST A FEW MORE ADJUSTMENTS TO THE THRUSTERS AND IT WILL BE READY.

I HAVE A GOOD FEELING ABOUT THIS ONE, COLONEL. I THINK IT MIGHT FINALLY BE THE ONE TO *MAKE CONTACT.*

you never give up, do you, Walky?

"You were always such a loyal and diligent friend."

I...I only wish I could be the same for you. But ever since-- ever since the *Para-Zone* my mind has been...

Well, I haven't been myself, have I?

NONSENSE, COLONEL. YOU'LL ALWAYS BE MY COMMANDING OFFICER.

I... Ah! What's this, then? Are you building yourself a *MATE,* Walky?

NO, I TOLD YOU, IT'S--

Must be ever vigilant, Talky-Walky. The Para-Zone needs me... inverted stars and hordes of Nothing Beasts. Can't let them out...

KZZZ

YES, OF COURSE, COLONEL. GOD-SPEED TO YOU.

WALKY, I'M HEADING TO TOWN TO GET SOME GROCERIES. HAVE YOU SEEN GAIL AND BARBALIEN?

AH, NO, ABRAHAM. BUT WOULD YOU MIND PICKING ME UP SOME MORE SOLDER? I'M ALMOST OUT.

:SIGH: YOU STILL WORKING ON THAT THING?

THIS *THING*, ABRAHAM, MAY BE OUR BEST CHANCE OF RESCUE! I REALLY WISH YOU'D BE MORE SUPPORTIVE.

*HUMPH!* WELL, MAYBE I DON'T THINK ***WE NEED*** RESCUE, WALKY.

WELL, I ***DO***. YOU'RE NOT THE ONE STUCK IN THE BODY OF A NINE-YEAR-OLD, ABE.

YEAH, WELL, SOME DAYS I'D BE GLAD TO TRADE. ARTHRITIS IS KILLING ME.

BOO-HOO. WE'RE COMING WITH YOU.

FINE. AND ***YOU*** JUST MAKE SURE YOU KEEP THE BARN DOOR ***CLOSED*** WHILE I'M GONE, TALKY-WALKY. LAST THING WE NEED IS SOMEONE SEEING YOU!

YES, ABRAHAM. I KNOW THE DRILL.

PUT YOUR SEAT BELT ON, GAIL.

IS THAT A JOKE?

YOU KNOW ABE DOESN'T HAVE A SENSE OF HUMOR, GAIL.

KAW!

SHHH...CALM YOURSELF.

THEY'RE GOING TO TOWN. I'LL NEED TO ***CONCENTRATE,*** AND I DON'T NEED YOU SQUAWKING IN MY EAR.

...I WON'T BE TOO LONG. MEET BACK HERE IN AN HOUR?

FINE.

YES. SOUNDS GOOD. HAVE FUN.

DINER

WHAT'S THAT SUPPOSED TO MEAN?

OH... NOTHING, ABRAHAM.

DING

HUMPH!

ABRAHAM SLAM. WHAT'S THAT GRUMPY LOOK FOR?

I DON'T REMEMBER ANYMORE, TAMMY.

THAT'S MORE LIKE IT.

BLACK?

ALWAYS.

DIDN'T EXPECT TO SEE YOU IN TOWN TODAY.

WELL, WASN'T PLANNING ON IT. BUT THEN I GOT TO THINKING.

THINKING ABOUT WHAT?

YOU.

YOU OLD *DOG*. SWEET TALK LIKE THAT WILL GET YOU EVERY-WHERE.

THAT'S THE PLAN.

--DON'T KNOW ABOUT THAT! BUT IT'S NICE TO BE OUTSIDE. CAN'T SAY I MISS THE RAIN.

HELLO. CARE TO GRAB A BITE?

OH, UH...I SHOULD PROBABLY GET THESE TO THE TRUCK.

THEY'LL KEEP. WHY DON'T YOU PUT THEM DOWN AND GRAB A COFFEE?

WELL, I GUESS I COULD USE A PIT STOP.

THAT'S THE SPIRIT. I'M FATHER QUINN. I JUST MOVED TO THE PARISH. TAKING OVER FOR FATHER DRAKE.

OH, UH... MARK MARKZ. I, UH--I DIDN'T KNOW FATHER DRAKE VERY WELL, I'M AFRAID.

AH, NOT A CHURCHGOING MAN, THEN?

UH...NOT AS MUCH THESE DAYS. I'VE LAPSED.

WELL, YOU'LL HAVE TO PUT THE COFFEE BACK THEN, I'M AFRAID.

...

I'M JOKING.

AH, OKAY. GOOD.

SO...I GUESS I SHOULD MAKE MY SALES PITCH.

THE BOSS IS ALWAYS WATCHING, RIGHT?

HA, YES. BUT IT WOULD BE GREAT TO SEE YOU OUT AT ***MASS***. NO PRESSURE, BUT MAYBE IT'S TIME YOU GAVE IT ANOTHER SHOT?

WELL, I HATE TO DISAPPOINT YOU. BUT I THINK MY CHURCHGOING DAYS MAY BE OVER, FATHER.

NEVER SAY NEVER. THE DOOR IS ALWAYS OPEN, MARK.

MARK MARKZ. WHAT IS THAT? EASTERN EUROPEAN?

UH...IT'S SWEDISH.

SO I WAS THINKING I COULD COME BY TONIGHT, AFTER I FINISH UP AT HOME?

MAYBE I COULD COME OUT TO THE *FARM* FOR A CHANGE? DON'T YOU THINK IT'S TIME I MET THAT FAMILY OF YOURS, ABE?

WE'VE BEEN THROUGH THIS, TAMMY...MY FAMILY IS--WELL, IT'S COMPLICATED.

EVERY FAMILY IS COMPLICATED. I JUST WANT TO--

DING

DING

SLAM. WE NEED TO *TALK.*

WHAT DO YOU WANT, REDD?

THIS IS NONE OF YOUR BUSINESS, TAMMY. I FOUND SLAM'S *GRANDDAUGHTER* SHOPLIFTING CIGARETTES FROM THE STOP AND GO.

GET BENT, TRUEHEART.

GAIL? IS THAT TRUE?

...

THANK YOU, SHERIFF. I'LL DEAL WITH GAIL.

IF YOU COULD HANDLE HER, SHE WOULDN'T BE SHOP-LIFTING CIGARETTES AT NINE, SLAM.

THEN AGAIN, I SHOULD KNOW TO LOWER MY EXPECTATIONS WHEN IT COMES TO *YOUR* FAMILY.

KIDS GET IN TROUBLE ALL THE TIME, REDD. IT'S HARDLY A POLICE MATTER. WE *BOTH* KNOW THIS ISN'T ABOUT GAIL.

OH REALLY, TAMMY? THEN WHAT *IS* IT ABOUT?

WE'RE DIVORCED, REDD. WHAT I DO IS *MY DAMNED BUSINESS!*

YEAH, AND *WHO* YOU DO. RIGHT, TAMMY? THOUGH YOU NEVER WERE VERY PICKY.

WATCH YOUR *MOUTH,* TRUEHEART.

OR *WHAT,* SLAM? WHAT ARE YOU GONNA DO?

LET'S GO, GAIL.

SHOULD HAVE BEAT HIS ASS, *GRANDPA.*

W
N
SIGH
XII
XI
GAIL! BARBALIEN! IT'S ALMOST EIGHT!

ABRAHAM, ARE--ARE THE OTHERS COMING?

I DON'T THINK SO, WALKY.

WHY DON'T WE GIVE THEM FIVE MORE MINUTES BEFORE WE START?

NO POINT, WALKY. THEY'VE... THEY'VE HAD *ENOUGH*. I DON'T THINK--

AM I LATE?

COLONEL. MADAME DRAGONFLY. UM...NO--NO, YOU'RE NOT LATE.

WHERE ARE THE OTHERS, THEN?

RIGHT HERE.

WELL, THEN...I GUESS I'LL GET STARTED. I...I'VE BEEN THINKING ABOUT WHAT I WAS GOING TO SAY ALL WEEK, THIS BEING OUR TENTH ANNIVERSARY HERE AND ALL.

BUT THE TRUTH IS--WELL, THE TRUTH IS YOU'VE ALL REALLY BEEN *PISSING ME OFF* LATELY.

HELL, I KNOW WE NEVER WANTED TO COME TO THE FARM. BUT WE MADE OUR CHOICES, OUR SACRIFICES, AND THIS IS WHERE WE ENDED UP.

THAT'S ALL HISTORY NOW. THAT'S *OUR* HISTORY AND OURS ALONE.

I TRIED MY BEST TO MAKE THIS A HOME...FOR ME... FOR *YOU.*

BUT ALL YOU DO IS WHINE ABOUT HOW WE CAN'T *LEAVE,* AND HOW WE'RE STUCK.

WELL, BOO-HOO.

AT LEAST WE'RE STILL ALIVE. WE CAN *NEVER FORGET THAT.*

MOST OF ALL, WE CAN NEVER FORGET *HIM.* WHAT HE GAVE UP FOR ALL OF US.

"JOE WEBER WAS THE BRAVEST MAN I EVER MET.

"HE *NEVER* BACKED DOWN FROM A FIGHT, NO MATTER WHAT."

AND HE GAVE *HIS LIFE* SO WE COULD HAVE *THIS* LIFE. WE NEED TO *REMEMBER* THAT. WE NEED TO REMEMBER THAT WE ARE *STILL HERE.*

IT MAY NOT BE THE LIFE WE WANTED. BUT IT'S THE LIFE WE HAVE. AND AT LEAST WE HAVE IT *TOGETHER.*

Ten years.

Ten years ago today since they saved ***Spiral City*** and disappeared.

To most, they don't seem real anymore. Like urban legends... ghost stories.

But they ***were real.*** I know, because ***I was there.*** I was only nine, but I remember the terror...the fear.

It's still there, in the air. It infected the city and never left us.

They stopped him. They defeated the Anti-God and saved us all.

In the aftermath, their bodies were never found. They were presumed to have been obliterated in the final battle.

They were the greatest heroes of a ***lost age...***

Abraham Slam, the original two-fisted crime buster.

Golden Gail, America's superpowered sweetheart.

Barbalien, the Warlord from Mars, and Colonel Weird, swashbuckling space hero...

And my dad...Joseph Weber... ***The Black Hammer.*** Hero of the streets.

There is ***no story*** I won't chase down. Not when ***I believe*** in it. And I tell you this, dear readers of Spiral City...***I believe, more than anything,*** that ***they are still alive.***

I believe that they're ***still out there*** somewhere…

…and no matter what, ***I'm going to find them.***

DARK HORSE PUBLICATIONS®

NO. 2

# Black Hammer

## COMICS

AMERICA'S
SUPER-SWEETHEART

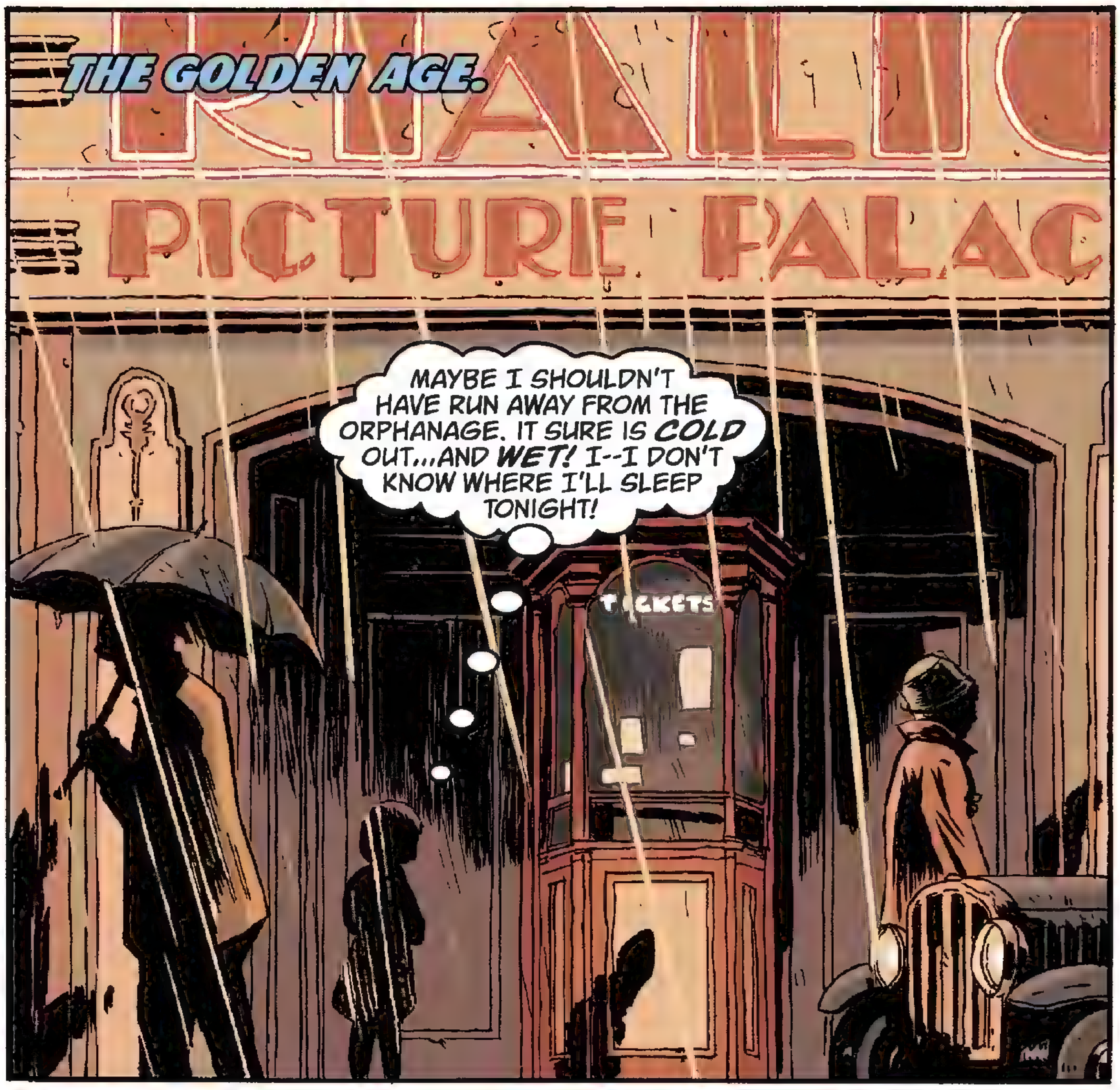
GOLDEN GAIL

DELIVERS
FUN!
ACTION!
LAUGHS!
THRILLS!

SPIRAL CITY.

# The CURSE of ZAFRAM!

THE GOLDEN AGE.



WHAT ARE YOU DOING OUT HERE ALL *ALONE,* LITTLE GIRL? SHOULDN'T YOU BE AT HOME?

TICKETS

WHA--?! WHY--WHY, YOU *STARTLED ME,* MISTER!

AND *WHAT'S IT TO YOU* WHAT I DO, ANYWAY, MISTER? YOU A COPPER OR SOMETHING?

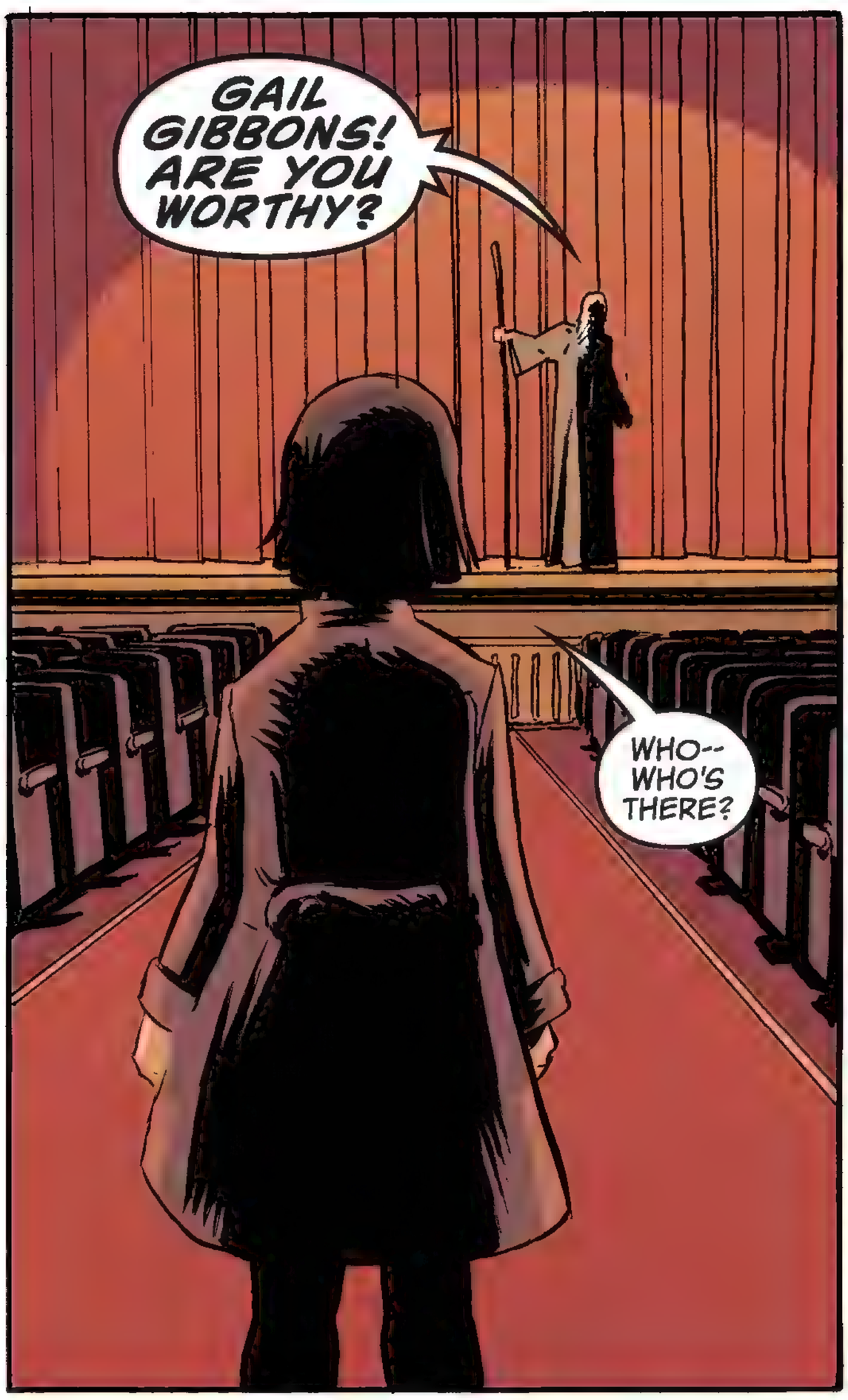
NO, GAIL GIBBONS, I AM NO POLICEMAN. JUST *A FRIEND* WHO WANTS YOU TO BE SAFE. HERE, TAKE THIS MOVIE TICKET.

H-HOW DO YOU KNOW MY NAME?

HE'S *GONE!* LIKE HE WAS NEVER HERE!

TICKETS

I KNOW I SHOULD GET AS FAR AWAY FROM THIS *CREEPY* MOVIE THEATER AS I CAN, BUT MY CURIOSITY HAS THE BEST OF ME!


GAIL GIBBONS! ARE YOU WORTHY?
WHO-- WHO'S THERE?

I AM THE WIZARD ZAFRAM.

ZAFRAM?

BOOOOOM

WH-WHAT'S *HAPPENED* TO ME?!

YOU SPOKE MY NAME, GAIL. AND MY NAME IS THE *GOLDEN WORD*...

...IT IS PROPHESIED THAT WHEN SOMEONE *WORTHY* AND PURE OF HEART SPEAKS IT, THEY SHALL INHERIT MY *POWER!*

THIS IS INCREDIBLE! I--I CAN *FLY,* AND I FEEL SO *STRONG!*

YES! YOU SEE, I HAVE BEEN IMPRISONED HERE IN THIS WORLD BETWEEN WORLDS FOR *EONS.* AND NOW, WITH MY POWER SAFE INSIDE OF *YOU*...

...I CAN BE *FREE* AT LAST!

HOLD ON! I'LL...I'LL GET *HELP!*

NO! I NEED NO HELP. AND I WILL *ALWAYS* BE WITH YOU, GAIL...IN YOUR HEART. YOU ONLY NEED TO SAY MY NAME.

SAY IT, GAIL...SAY IT AGAIN. SAY MY *NAME.*

ZAFRAM.

WHAT WAS THAT, GAIL?

NOTHING.

WELL, TIME TO CHEER UP. YOUR RIDE IS HERE.

:SIGH: ***WHY THE FUCK*** DO I HAVE TO DO THIS ***AGAIN?!*** THIS IS RIDICULOUS, ABRAHAM.

WE GO THROUGH THIS EVERY YEAR, GAIL. WE NEED TO BLEND IN. SO YOU NEED TO GO TO SCHOOL LIKE ***EVERY OTHER*** NINE-YEAR-OLD IN TOWN.

BUT I'M NOT NINE YEARS OLD, ABE. I'M ***FIFTY-FIVE.***

AND YOU ***SMELL LIKE GIN.*** HAVE YOU ALREADY STARTED?

SCHOOL BUS

SQUUEEK

:pt-shhh:

HOW THE HELL ***ELSE*** AM I GOING TO GET THROUGH THIS FUCKING CHARADE?

JESUS!

AND GOOD MORNING TO YOU, ABE! FIRST DAY OF *SCHOOL*, GAIL! AREN'T YOU EXCITED?

OH, SHE SURE IS! SHE COULD BARELY SLEEP LAST NIGHT. ISN'T THAT RIGHT, SWEETHEART? AREN'T YOU EXCITED?

YEAH, GRANDPA...

...JUST GODDAMNED THRILLED.

...TELL ME AGAIN WHY *THIS* GIZMO IS GOING TO BE ANY DIFFERENT, WALKY?

AS I'VE ALREADY EXPLAINED, BARBALIEN, I HAVE DRAMATICALLY REFINED THE THRUSTER SYSTEM ON THIS PROBE'S DESIGN. IN ADDITION, THE SHELL IS MUCH MORE DURABLE THAN THE LAST ONE.

DO YOU MEAN LIKE THE *LAST TEN*?

YOUR ATTEMPTS AT HUMOR ARE *NOT APPRECIATED*, BARBALIEN. THIS IS ONLY THE *SIXTH PROBE* I HAVE CONSTRUCTED.

:SIGH: I LOVE YOU, TALKY-WALKY...I REALLY DO. YOU'RE A *VERY LOVABLE* OLD CURMUDGEON OF A ROBOT. AND I'LL HELP YOU LUG THESE THINGS OUT HERE AS MANY TIMES AS YOU ASK.

BUT I REALLY THINK IT'S TIME YOU CONSIDERED *GIVING UP* ON THIS.

GIVING UP? BUT HOW ELSE ARE WE EVER TO FIND OUR WAY OUT OF THIS PLACE, BARBALIEN? WE CANNOT LEAVE THE BOUNDARIES OF THE TOWN. WE ALL KNOW WHAT HAPPENED THE *LAST TIME ONE OF US TRIED...*

SENDING THESE PROBES OUT BEYOND THE TOWN PERIMETER IS OUR BEST BET AT FINDING *RESCUE.*

BLEEP

WE DON'T EVEN KNOW WHERE WE *ARE*, WALKY. WE MAY NOT EVEN BE IN *OUR UNIVERSE*. HELL, FOR ALL WE KNOW, THIS MAY BE *ALL THAT'S LEFT* OF THE UNIVERSE.

AH, YES. THE POCKET UNIVERSE THEORY. I'VE COME TO THINK THAT IS A *HIGHLY IMPROBABLE* EXPLANATION OF WHAT THE FARM AND THE TOWN REALLY ARE.

THE OTHER TOWNSFOLK SEEM TO COME AND GO NORMALLY. THEY ALL HAVE CONTACT WITH THE OUTSIDE WORLD. AS FAR AS WE CAN TELL, IT'S ONLY THE *SIX OF US* WHO ARE TRAPPED HERE.

BLEEP

YOU REALLY THINK THERE'S SOMETHING ELSE OUT THERE, WALKY?

YES, I DO. I JUST HAVE TO FIGURE OUT HOW TO REACH THEM. YOU NEED TO HAVE FAITH, BARBALIEN.

...FAITH...

ARE YOU READY FOR THE LAUNCH?

SURE...LET'S DO IT. WANT ME TO DO A COUNTDOWN?

NO NEED.

FWOOSH

SO FAR, SO GOOD. THE PROBE IS ABOUT TO BREACH THE ESTABLISHED BORDER OF THE TOWN, AND I STILL HAVE A STRONG READING.

BEEP BEEP BEEP

KRRZZT

THERE IT GOES! TOWN PERIMETER BREACHED!

BEEP BEEP

AND I STILL HAVE IT! I'M STILL READING THE PROBE! I THINK I DID IT!

I THINK--

KZZT

NO! IT'S GONE.

I DON'T UNDERSTAND. IT *SHOULD* HAVE WORKED. THIS MAKES NO SCIENTIFIC SENSE.

YOU'LL GET IT NEXT TIME, WALKY. LUCKY NUMBER SEVEN.

YES...MAYBE NEXT TIME.

COLONEL?!

Madame Dragonfly... I--I DO NOT like it here in your cabin.

There are--too many rooms.

BLUP BLUP

MORE THAN YOU KNOW. AND I'VE TOLD YOU BEFORE. IF YOU DON'T LIKE IT, THEN DON'T POP IN HERE LIKE THIS. IT'S CREEPY.

...YOU'RE creepy.

WHAT DO YOU WANT, COLONEL?

I am *WORRIED* about you, Madame Dragonfly. I am worried that *EVERYTHING* we have here may be in danger.

*I'M* FINE.

You don't seem fine. You seem... distant.

*I'M* DISTANT?! PLEASE. YOU SPEND MORE TIME IN THAT DAMN PARA-ZONE THAN YOU DO *HERE* ANYMORE.

SO DON'T YOU *DARE* TALK TO ME ABOUT BEING DISTANT, COLONEL. IF YOU SHOULD BE WORRIED ABOUT ANYONE, IT'S *YOURSELF!*

But they *NEED YOU* more than they need me, Dragonfly.

THAT'S-- THAT'S JUST NOT TRUE. *THEY ALL HATE ME.*

*GAIL NEEDS YOU.* She's in trouble. She's in a box. There is smoke. *SHE NEEDS HER MOTHER.*

WHAT?!

WHAT THE HELL ARE YOU TALKING ABOUT?

SPIRAL CITY.
THE GOLDEN AGE.

HA HA HA HA! ROBO-KING IS THE PINNACLE OF MY UNDEAD GENIUS! SPIRAL CITY WILL FINALLY **BELONG** TO DOCTOR SHERLOCK FRANKENSTEIN!

OH NO! MY ARCHENEMY **DOCTOR SHERLOCK FRANKEN-STEIN** IS ATTACKING THE CITY AGAIN!

I--I SHOULD SAY THE MAGIC WORD... I SHOULD TRANSFORM INTO **GOLDEN GAIL** AND USE MY POWERS TO STOP THAT GHOUL ONCE AND FOR ALL, BUT I JUST **CAN'T!**

WHEN I BECOME GOLDEN GAIL I CHANGE BACK INTO A *LITTLE GIRL.* BROCK HANSON IS SO DREAMY... IF HE SAW ME *LIKE THAT* HE'D *NEVER* ASK ME TO PROM!

AND IF THE OTHER KIDS AT SPIRAL HIGH SEE ME AS A *STUPID LITTLE KID* THEY'LL NEVER STOP MAKING FUN OF ME!

I--I DON'T KNOW WHAT TO DO. I CAN'T LET DOC SHERLOCK HURT ANYONE ELSE! MAYBE I SHOULD JUST SAY IT...

ZAFRAM.

ZAFRAM.

*GAIL! WHAT ARE YOU DOING?!* YOU ARE SUPPOSED TO BE IN CLASS, YOUNG LADY!

ARE--ARE YOU *SMOKING?!*

SHIT.

♩♪♫♫♩

RMMMMBBLLLE

RAIN'S COMING, GIRL. GOOD THING, TOO. WHEAT NEEDS IT.

ABRAHAM! PHONE FOR YOU!

IT'S THE SCHOOL AGAIN. GAIL'S IN TROUBLE.

SHIT.

--THANK YOU FOR COMING, MR. SLAMKOWSI. IT'S UNFORTUNATE THAT WE FIND OURSELVES HERE AGAIN, AND ON THE *FIRST DAY OF SCHOOL*, NO LESS.

ST MARK'S TARY SCHOOL

I HAD HOPED AFTER ALL THE PROBLEMS WE HAD WITH *YOUR GRANDDAUGHTER* LAST YEAR, WE COULD GET OFF TO A BETTER START.

YES, WELL... ME *TOO*, MS. ROUNDTREE.

I CAN ASSURE YOU THAT WE TAKE THIS VERY SERIOUSLY, AND WE'LL MAKE SURE GAIL UNDERSTANDS WHAT SHE DID WAS WRONG.

REALLY? WHICH PART? WAS IT SKIPPING CLASS? SMOKING? CURSING? I MEAN, MR. SLAMKOWSI, SHE'S ONLY IN *FOURTH GRADE*...NO *ONE* SMOKES IN *FOURTH GRADE!*

I'M SORRY, BUT YOUR ASSURANCES NO LONGER HOLD MUCH WATER. WITH ALL DUE RESPECT, WE HAVEN'T SEEN GAIL'S MOTHER AROUND HERE IN A *LONG WHILE*. I'M WORRIED THAT YOU'RE RAISING YOUR GRANDDAUGHTER *ALONE* AND YOU'RE JUST *NOT UP TO THE JOB!*

AW, WHAT THE HELL DO YOU KNOW ABOUT IT, ROUNDTREE, YOU OLD--

*QUIET, GAIL!*

AHEM...MS. ROUNDTREE, I UNDERSTAND YOUR FRUSTRATION. BUT I ASSURE YOU GAIL HAS ALL THE SUPPORT SHE NEEDS AT HOME. GAIL'S MOTHER HAS BEEN *ILL*, AND--

I'M SORRY I'M LATE. THAT RAIN REALLY *IS* COMING DOWN OUT THERE.

OH!

NOW THEN... MS. ROUNDTREE, TELL ME WHAT WE CAN DO TO WORK WITH YOU TO GET GAIL BACK ON TRACK?

MRS. SLAMKOWSI, AS I WAS TELLING YOUR FATHER, I--WELL, I'M AFRAID IT'S GONE TOO *FAR* FOR THAT. I THINK WE NEED TO CALL CHILD SERVICES.

OH, I DON'T THINK THAT IS NECESSARY...

ꓘꓵꓤꓤ ꓲꓵ ꓕꓵꓲꓠ ꓲꓕ ꓠꓲꓕꓕꓲꓤ ꓕꓵ ꓠꓲꓕꓕꓲꓤ ꓕꓵꓲꓠ ꓲꓕ ꓠꓲꓕꓕꓲꓤ

OF COURSE...GAIL IS AN IDEAL STUDENT. WE ARE SO LUCKY TO HAVE HER HERE AT ST. MARK'S. I'M GLAD YOU AND YOUR FATHER COULD STOP BY SO I COULD TELL YOU HOW ***WONDERFULLY*** SHE'S DOING, MRS. SLAMKOWSI.

ARY SCHOOL

THIS IS COMPLETELY RIDICULOUS! I'M DONE! I'M ***DONE*** WITH THIS BULLSHIT!

:SIGH:

DRAGONFLY, SOMEONE WILL ***SEE*** YOU!

NOT UNLESS I WANT THEM TO, ABRAHAM.

I CAN'T DECIDE WHAT'S ***MORE*** HUMILIATING-- HAVING TO GO TO FOURTH GRADE ***AGAIN***...

...BEING TALKED DOWN TO BY THAT OLD PRUDE IN THERE, OR HAVING TO PRETEND THIS ***HAG*** IS ACTUALLY ***MY MOTHER!***

IF I REALLY HAD GIVEN BIRTH TO A ***SPAWN*** LIKE YOU, GAIL... I WOULD HAVE KILLED MYSELF A LONG TIME AGO.

NEXT TIME, YOU'RE ON YOUR OWN.

GOOD RIDDANCE.

GAIL, WOULD YOU ***PLEASE*** JUST ***SHUT THE HELL UP*** AND GET IN THE TRUCK?

SLAM

I'M SORRY, ABE.

WE'RE DOING OUR BEST, GAIL. WE'RE ALL JUST TRYING TO MAKE THIS WORK...MAKE SOME KIND OF LIFE HERE.

OH, BULLSHIT, ABRAHAM! IT'S NOT THE SAME FOR ME, AND YOU ***KNOW*** IT! YOU LOVE IT HERE. YOU HAVE THE FARM, YOU HAVE ***TAMMY.***

BUT THIS-- THIS ISN'T REALLY ***ME,*** ABE. THIS IS NOT WHO I AM.

ZAFRAM.

"THERE WAS A TIME WHEN I *HATED* BEING GOLDEN GAIL...ALMOST QUIT. I WAS GROWING UP AND I DESPISED TURNING BACK INTO A KID."

ZAFRAM.

PEEP SHO

RUMB

SEX

"BUT BY THE TIME THE SEVENTIES ROLLED AROUND, I WASN'T JUST GETTING *OLDER*...I WAS GETTING *OLD*."

ZAFRAM.

"THE OLDER I GOT, THE MORE I STARTED TO *ENJOY* BEING GOLDEN GAIL AGAIN. IT WAS LIKE MAINLINING MY OWN PERSONAL FOUNTAIN OF YOUTH.

"AND AS LONG AS IT WAS JUST FOR A LITTLE WHILE, IT WAS GREAT...

"...BUT THEN WE *CAME HERE,* AND MY MAGIC WORD JUST *DIDN'T WORK ANYMORE.*"

THE WIZARD *LIED TO ME,* ABE. THE MAGIC WORD ISN'T A GIFT. *IT'S A GODDAMN CURSE.* THE FARM, THE TOWN--WHATEVER IT IS--IT'S NOT THE PRISON, ABE. THIS *BODY IS.*

AND I KEEP THINKING...IF I JUST BELIEVE HARD ENOUGH...IF I JUST KEEP SAYING IT, ONE OF THESE TIMES IT WILL WORK. AND I'LL BE *ME* AGAIN.

ZAFRAM!

ZAFRAM!!

SHHH... IT'S ALL RIGHT, GAIL.

ZAFRAM!

IT'S GONNA BE OKAY.

WHAT ARE WE GONNA DO, ABE?

...GOT ANY OF THAT *GIN* LEFT?

YOU THINK WE'RE EVER GONNA GET ***OUT*** OF THIS PLACE, ABE?

I DON'T KNOW, GAIL...

"...I JUST DON'T KNOW."

SHRAK

DARK HORSE COMICS

APPROVED BY THE COSMIC CODE COMMITTEE

# BLACK HAMMER

No.3

STARRING

## BARBALIEN

WARLORD FROM MARS!

ALSO! A GHASTLY NEW TALE FROM THE CABIN OF HORRORS!

YOU SHALL CROSS THE BARREN DESERT, BUT YOU SHALL NOT DIE OF THIRST. YOU SHALL WANDER FAR IN SAFETY THOUGH YOU DO NOT KNOW THE WAY...

...YOU SHALL SPEAK YOUR WORDS IN FOREIGN LANDS AND ALL WILL UNDERSTAND. YOU SHALL SEE THE FACE OF GOD AND LIVE.

BE NOT AFRAID. I GO BEFORE YOU ALWAYS. COME FOLLOW ME, AND I WILL GIVE YOU REST.

IF YOU PASS THROUGH RAGING WATERS IN THE SEA, YOU SHALL NOT DROWN. IF YOU WALK AMID THE BURNING FLAMES, YOU SHALL NOT BE HARMED.

IF YOU STAND BEFORE THE POWER OF HELL AND DEATH IS AT YOUR SIDE, KNOW THAT I AM WITH YOU THROUGH IT ALL.

WHERE DID THEY COME FROM?!

THE THIRD PLANET. OUR CLOSEST NEIGHBOR. THERE WILL BE MORE OF THEM. WE CANNOT ALLOW THAT.

NASA

17-Z

DO NOT PANIC. THEY MAY BE A *PEACEFUL* SPECIES. I SEE NO WEAPONS.

# The WARLORD of MARS

DO NOT BE SO NAIVE, MARK MARKZ! WE SHOULD LAUNCH OUR *WAR FLEET*. WIPE THEM OUT BEFORE THEY HAVE A CHANCE TO ATTACK *US!*

THAT IS FAR TOO RASH, CHANCELLOR LOK LOKZ. WE SHOULD SEND A SCOUT...USE OUR ABILITY TO CHANGE SHAPE TO LIVE AMONG THEM, EDUCATE OURSELVES. WE MAY FIND *ALLIES*, NOT ENEMIES, ON THE THIRD PLANET.

*HA!* LOOK AT THIS WEAK *FOOL*, JAN JANZ! JUST LIKE HIS FATHER BEFORE HIM--A *COWARD!*

YES, CHANCELLOR LOK LOKZ! I HAVE *HEARD* THAT MARK MARKZ WAS AFRAID OF BATTLE TRAINING. NOW I SEE THAT IT IS *TRUE!*

THESE ARE *NOT THE ONLY RUMORS* I HAVE HEARD ABOUT YOU, MARKZ...

MY FATHER DIED UNITING THE RED TRIBES OF MARS. HE DID IT WITH HIS WORDS, NOT HIS SWORD. THAT DID NOT MAKE HIM A COWARD.

AND I TRY TO LIVE MY LIFE BY THE SAME PRINCIPLE. AS FOR THESE *OTHER RUMORS*, CHANCELLOR LOK LOKZ, I WILL NOT DIGNIFY THEM WITH A RESPONSE.

YOU REALLY THINK WE SHOULD INVESTIGATE THE HOME OF THESE INVADERS, MARKZ?

:UNGH!:

KRAK

SPLORT

THEN I VOLUNTEER *YOU*, OUR *GREAT DIPLOMAT*, FOR THE MISSION.

*ME?!* IB-IBUT CHANCELLOR--I HAVE NO TRAINING IN SPACE FLIGHT OR ESPIONAGE!

MAYBE YOU SHOULD HAVE SPENT MORE TIME IN BATTLE TRAINING THEN, EH? LET'S SEE YOUR "*WORDS*" PROTECT YOU NOW.

OF COURSE, IF THE THIRD PLANET IS AS HARMLESS AS YOU THINK, IT SHOULD BE NO PROBLEM. PREPARE YOURSELF, MARKZ...YOUR SPACECRAFT LEAVES AT DAWN. MAYBE YOU CAN BRING *THAT HEAD* AS A PEACE OFFERING.

*BLESSED ARE YOUR POOR, FOR THE KINGDOM SHALL BE THEIRS. BLESSED ARE YOU THAT WEEP AND MOURN, FOR ONE DAY YOU SHALL LAUGH--*

BE NOT AFRAID. I GO BEFORE YOU ALWAYS. COME FOLLOW ME, AND I WILL GIVE YOU REST.

BLESSED ARE YOUR POOR, FOR THE KINGDOM SHALL BE THEIRS.

BLESSED ARE YOU THAT WEEP AND MOURN, FOR ONE DAY YOU SHALL LAUGH--

AND IF WICKED MEN INSULT AND HATE YOU ALL BECAUSE OF ME--

--BLESSED, BLESSED ARE YOU!

BE NOT AFRAID. I GO BEFORE YOU ALWAYS. COME FOLLOW ME, AND I WILL GIVE YOU REST.

YOU SHALL SPEAK YOUR WORDS IN FOREIGN LANDS AND ALL WILL UNDERSTAND. YOU SHALL SEE THE FACE OF GOD AND LIVE.

YOU SHALL SPEAK YOUR WORDS IN FOREIGN LANDS AND ALL WILL UNDERSTAND. YOU SHALL SEE THE FACE OF GOD AND LIVE--

WELL, ABE, I DIDN'T EXPECT *THAT* WHEN YOU SAID YOU WERE GOING TO STOP BY THE DINER LAST NIGHT.

OUR FIRST SLEEPOVER. HOW'D I DO?

NOT BAD FOR AN OLD MAN.

SO, AM I GOING TO GET TO SLEEP OVER AT *YOUR* HOUSE NEXT?

...

ABE?

MY FAMILY IS--WELL, IT'S *COMPLICATED*, TAMMY. I DON'T KNOW HOW THEY WOULD TAKE TO IT. MIGHT NEED TO GIVE THEM SOME TIME TO GET USED TO US FIRST.

WE'RE ADULTS, ABE. I'M SURE YOUR FAMILY CAN DEAL WITH IT. *I'M* THE ONE WITH THE JEALOUS EX WHO CARRIES A GUN.

HEH...I CAN HANDLE TRUEHEART, TAMMY. TRUST ME, GAIL IS MUCH SCARIER THAN THE GOOD SHERIFF'LL *EVER* BE.

WHAT *ARE* WE DOING HERE, ABE? I'M TOO OLD FOR A FLING. AND YOU'RE *DEFINITELY* TOO OLD FOR ONE.

HEY! I'M NOT *THAT* OLD...

LOOK, ABE... I'M GLAD WE HAPPENED. I AM. BUT I WANT MORE THAN THIS. DON'T YOU?

TAMMY, FOR THE FIRST TIME IN MY LIFE, I ACTUALLY FEEL CONTENT. FOR THE FIRST TIME IN MY LIFE, I FEEL LIKE I'M *WHERE I BELONG.*

BUT MY FAMILY...GAIL, MARK, MY DAUGHTER... THEY--

THEY WHAT? WHENEVER YOU START TO TALK ABOUT THEM, YOU TRAIL OFF, NEVER REALLY EXPLAINING ANYTHING.

IT'S COMPLI-CATED.

YEAH, AND THEN YOU SAY *THAT.* COME ON, ABE. IF YOU REALLY WANT US TO WORK, AT SOME POINT YOU HAVE GOT TO *LET ME IN.*

COME ON... YOU GOT *ME.* WHY DO YOU NEED THEM TOO?

DON'T--

:SIGH:

...WANNA COME OVER FOR DINNER TOMORROW NIGHT?

FAMILY DINNER?

FAMILY DINNER.

YES. I'D LOVE TO. THANK YOU, ABE.

HEY! I GOTTA GET GOING SOON.

WHY? IT'S MY DAY OFF.

I GOT CHORES TO DO.

OH, COME ON, OLD MAN. WHAT'S THE MATTER? DON'T HAVE THE STAMINA ANYMORE?

I'LL SHOW YOU STAMINA, LITTLE LADY... IT'S ONE OF MY SUPER-POWERS.

MY HERO...

DIDN'T THINK I'D EVER SEE ONE A YOU HERE.

ONE OF *US*, SHERIFF?

DIDN'T THINK YOU OR *YOUR FAMILY* WERE THE CHURCH-GOING TYPE.

YOU DON'T KNOW A THING ABOUT MY FAMILY, TRUE-HEART.

NO...NO ONE SEEMS TO KNOW MUCH OF *ANYTHING* ABOUT YOU. ALMOST LIKE YOU WANT TO KEEP IT THAT WAY.

MY EXPERIENCE, PEOPLE USUALLY ONLY DO THAT WHEN THEY HAVE *SOMETHING TO HIDE.*

UH-HUH. WELL, I KNOW HOW WORLDLY AND EXPERIENCED YOU ARE, SHERIFF. HAVE YOU EVER EVEN LEFT THIS TOWN?

JUST BECAUSE WE LIKE OUR PRIVACY DOESN'T MEAN WE'RE THE ENEMY.

NO...BUT MAYBE YOU'RE HERE BECAUSE YOU'VE DEVELOPED A GUILTY CONSCIENCE ABOUT SOMETHING? OR ***SOMEONE?***

AFTERNOON. SEND MY BEST WISHES TO ABE, WILL YOU?

ALWAYS A PLEASURE, SHERIFF.

SPLOOSH

=UNGH!=

...THIS WAY! HURRY!

THING'S *HEAVY,* BOSS. GOING AS FAST AS I CAN!

SHOULD BE HEAVY. LOADED WITH ENOUGH JUNK TO MAKE US *RICH.* SO, QUIT YOUR YAPPIN' AND PUT YOUR BACK INTO IT!

FREEZE!

AIN'T TAKIN' ME *ALIVE,* COPPER!

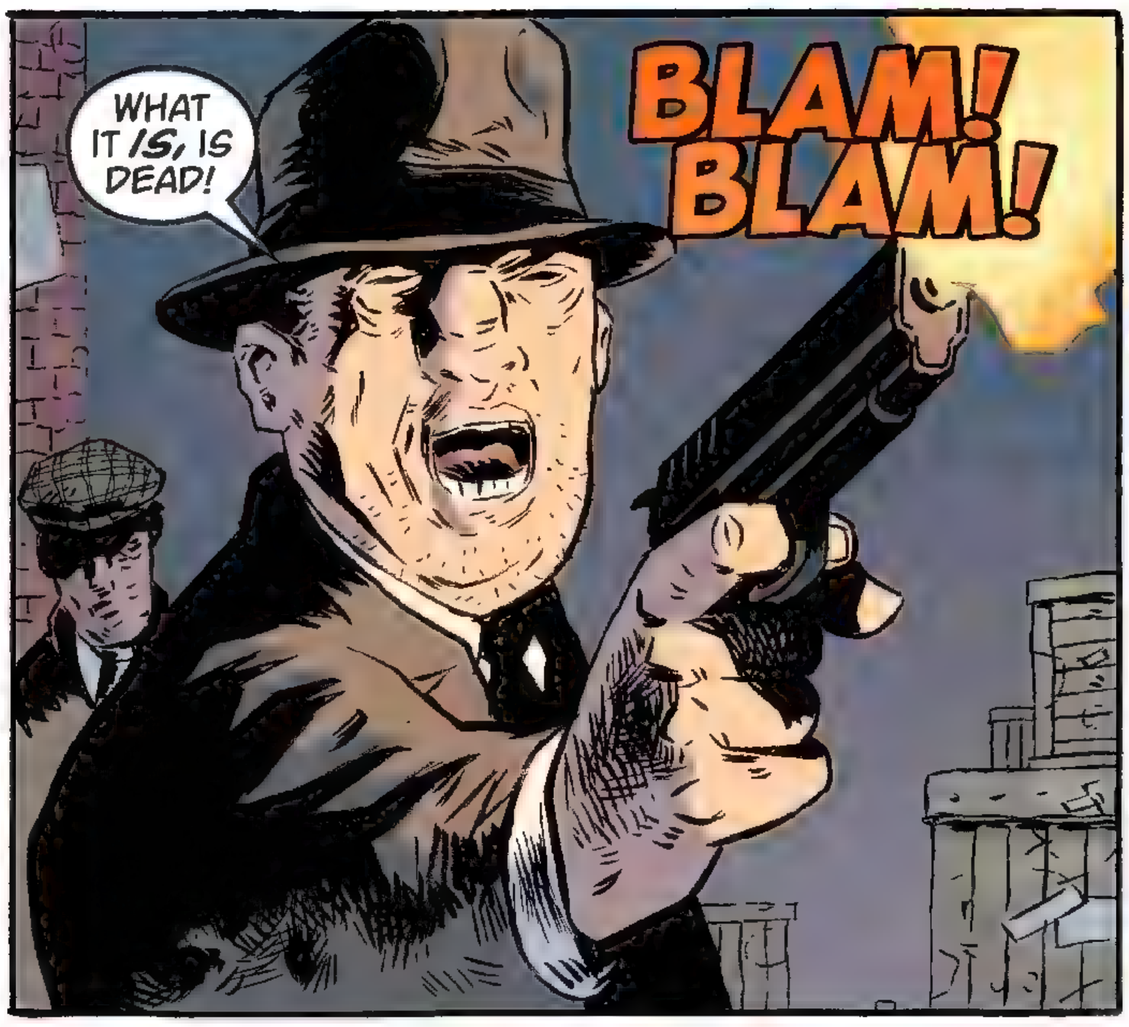
BLAM!

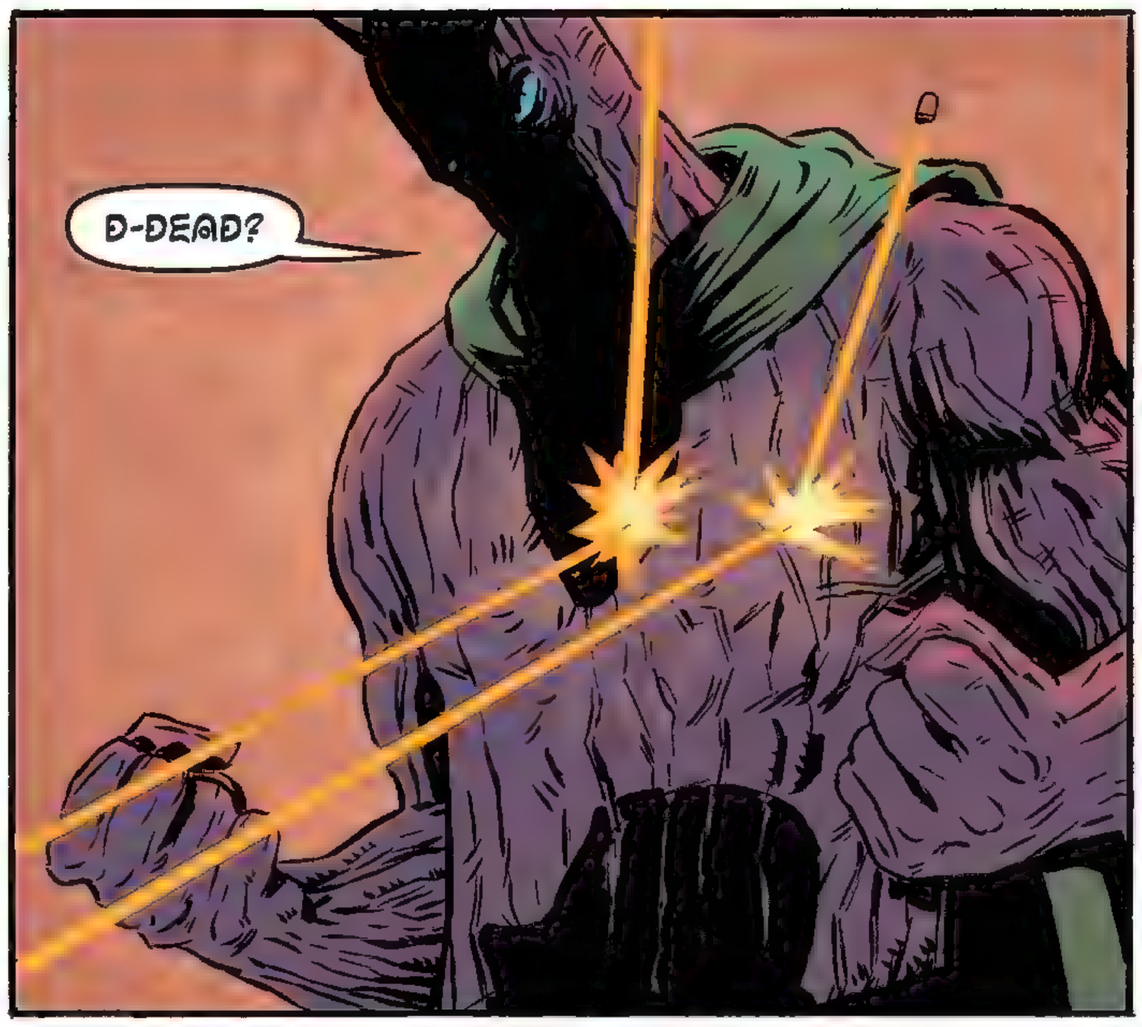
:UNGH!:

Y-YOU KILLED A COP, BOSS!

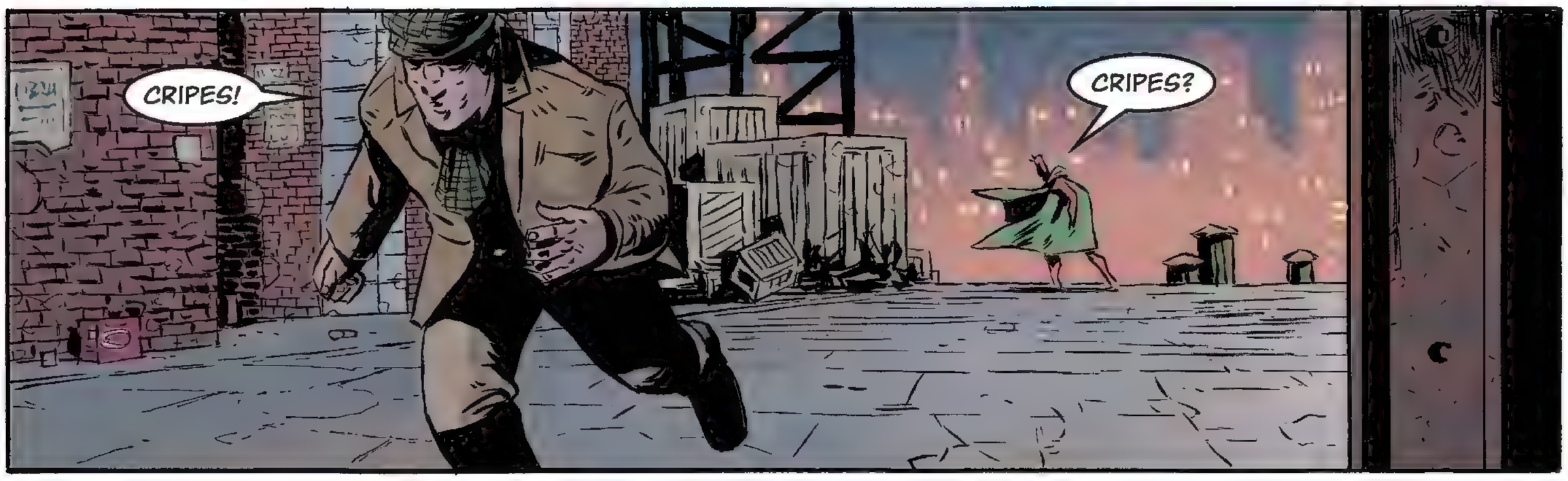
*RUN,* YOU IDIOT!

WH-WHAT THE HECK IS *THAT* THING?!


WHAT IT *IS*, IS DEAD!
BLAM! BLAM!


D-DEAD?

AAARGH!!
NO... DEAD.


CRIPES!
CRIPES?

NO RUN.
THUD!

CRIPES... NO DEAD...NO RUN... FREEZE.
WHAK!

DEAD. KILLED A COP. DEAD.

QUIT YOUR YAPPING AND PUT YOUR BACK INTO IT.

...AIN'T TAKING ME ALIVE.

SPLASH

SWEET CHRISTMAS! YOU TOOK THEM OUT WITHOUT ME!

NICE WORK, PARTNER!

...PARTNER.

--TELLING YOU, MAN, THESE FREAKS ARE TAKING OVER. THEY CAN'T BE TRUSTED. I MEAN, THIS ***BARBALIEN*** GUY IS THE WEIRDEST OF ALL. A WARLORD FROM MARS? I MEAN--***MARS?!***

OH, I DON'T KNOW...HE SEEMS ALL RIGHT TO ME. HELPING US DO OUR JOBS.

"I HEAR HE TOOK OUT ***METAL MINOTAUR*** LAST WEEK. STOPPED HIM FROM BOMBING CITY HALL."

HOW LONG WE BEEN PARTNERS NOW?

SIX YEARS.

***SIX YEARS.*** MAN, YOU'VE KNOWN ME ***THAT LONG*** AND YOU THINK YOU CAN WIN ME OVER. I'M NEVER GOING TO SIDE WITH THESE VIGILANTES. I DON'T CARE HOW MUCH YOU TRY TO SELL IT.

I DON'T SEE BARBALIEN OR ABE SLAM STAKING OUT WAREHOUSES IN THE EAST END FOR SIX HOURS STRAIGHT. THEY START DOING THAT, I MIGHT COME AROUND.

MAN...SIX YEARS. CAN'T BELIEVE WE'VE BEEN TOGETHER THAT LONG.

YEAH. SEEMS LIKE ONLY YESTERDAY WE MET.

I TELL YOU, MAN, YOU KNOW ME BETTER THAN JUST ABOUT ANYONE AT THIS POINT.

YEAH...

I DON'T HAVE A LOT OF OTHER FRIENDS.

YOU SHOULD GO OUT MORE. DON'T KNOW WHY YOU NEVER HIT THE BAR WITH THE *REST* OF THE SQUAD.

...NOT REALLY GOOD WITH CROWDS.

TRUTH IS, COLE...OUR PARTNERSHIP... OUR FRIENDSHIP HAS MEANT A LOT TO ME. I--I'VE LEARNED SO *MUCH* FROM YOU.

...YOU ALWAYS MADE ME FEEL LIKE I BELONGED.

WHAT THE %@# ARE YOU DOING?!

I--I THOUGHT--

YOU THOUGHT *WHAT?!* WHAT THE HELL, MAN?!

NO, I... I JUST--

YOU JUST NOTHING. GET *OUT.*

WHAT?

GET OUT OF THE CAR!

COLE, LOOK. I'M SORRY. I JUST--

SHOULD HAVE KNOWN, MAN. YOU'VE ALWAYS BEEN A FREAK!

SCREEECH!

"YOU'VE ALWAYS BEEN A FREAK.

"A FREAK.

"FREAK!"

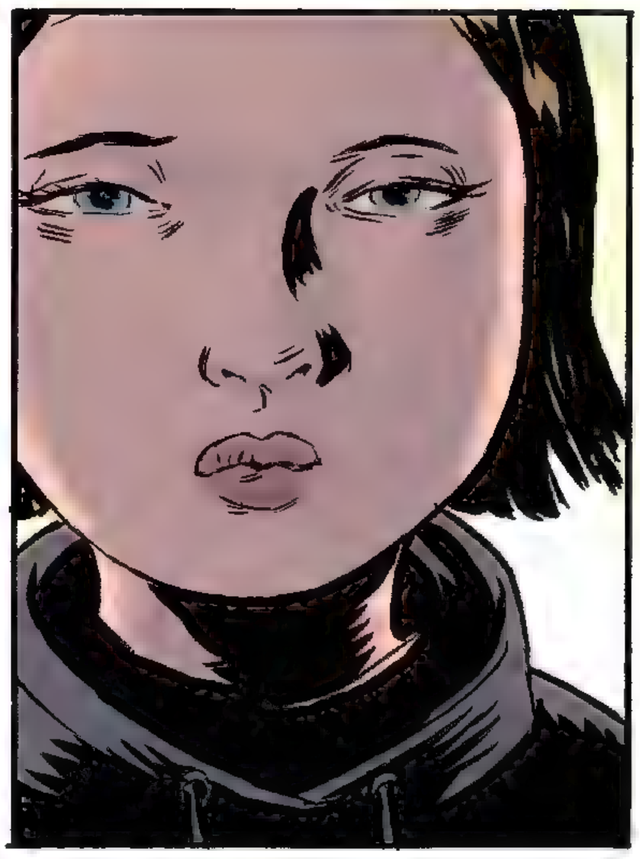
--THE HELL--?!

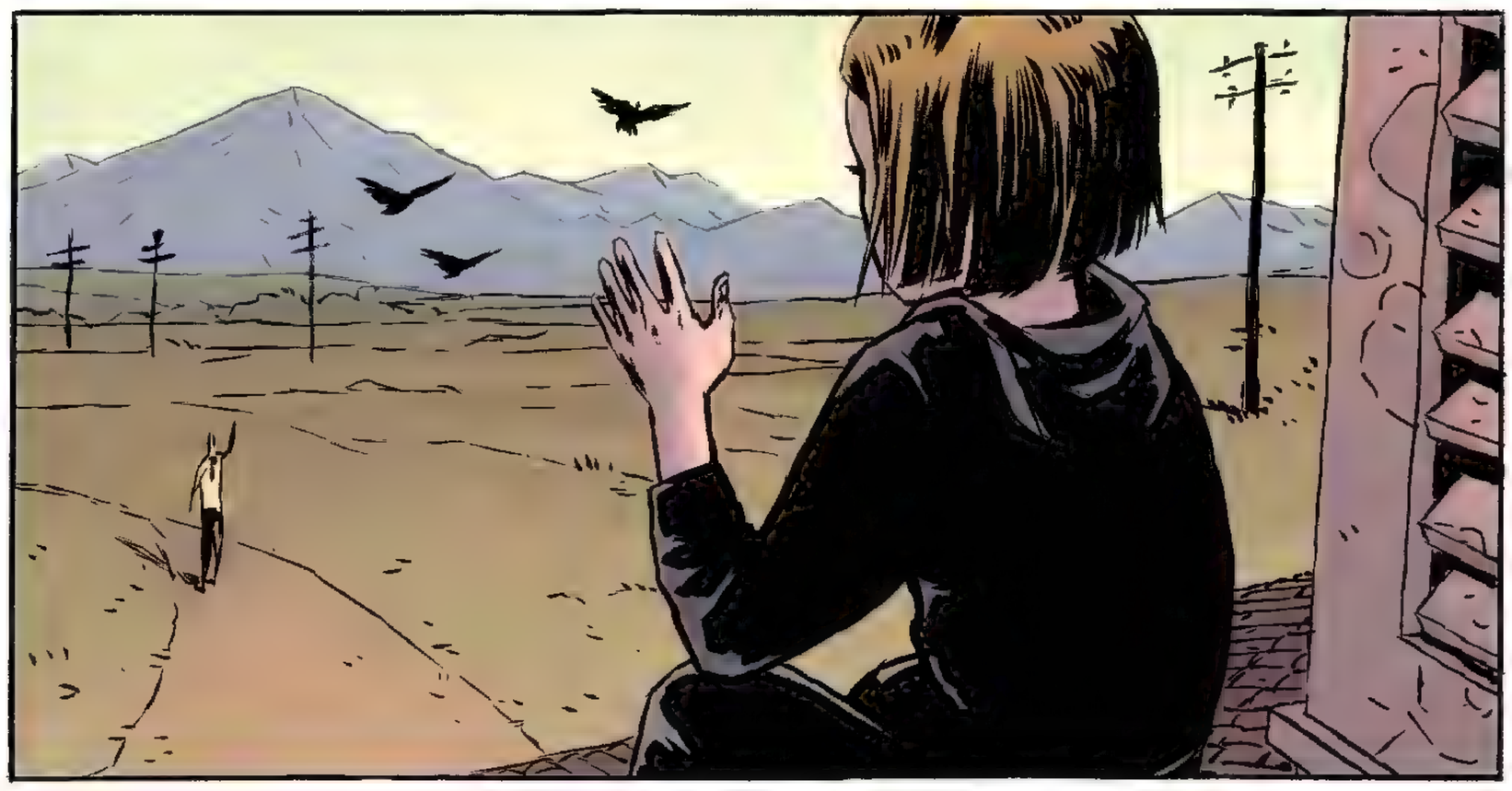
WHA-- WHAT THE HELL *IS* IT?!

WHAT AM I? *I* AM A FREAK...

...A *MONSTER!*

A MONSTER.





GAIL.
HEY, BARBIE. WHERE YOU BEEN?

BELIEVE IT OR NOT...I WAS AT CHURCH.
HAH, GOOD ONE. SERIOUSLY, WHERE'D YOU GO?
SERIOUSLY.

UH... WHY?

I DON'T REALLY KNOW. LOOKING FOR ***SOMETHING NEW,*** I GUESS.

DID YOU FIND IT?

MAYBE...

...TRUTH IS, I THINK I'M TOO SCARED TO FIND OUT.

IT'S FUNNY... MY POWER HAS ALWAYS ALLOWED ME TO FIT RIGHT IN. BE ANYONE. BUT I ALWAYS HIDE IN PLAIN SIGHT, NEVER REALLY A PART OF ANYTHING.

IT WAS LIKE THAT GROWING UP ON MARS. IT WAS LIKE THAT BACK IN MY OLD LIFE IN SPIRAL CITY. AND NOW... NOW I THINK I MIGHT HAVE FOUND SOMEONE ***LIKE ME.*** BUT--

I--UH...WELL, CHANCES ARE THIS PERSON MAY ***FEEL THE SAME WAY,*** BARBIE.

MAYBE THEY JUST DIDN'T HAVE THE COURAGE TO TELL YOU YET.

YOU THINK?

THERE'S ONLY ONE WAY TO FIND OUT.

YOU'RE RIGHT. I'VE NEVER BEEN A COWARD. AND THIS PLACE...ALL WE DO HERE IS ***HIDE.*** HIDE WHO WE REALLY ARE.

I'M GOING TO GO FOR IT, GAIL.

Y-YOU ARE?

YES.

SMEK

THANKS, GAIL. YOU REALLY ARE A SWEET-HEART.

UH... THANKS.

BLACK HAMMER

ELSEWHERE...

DR. TRIGG?

MS. WEBER! I'M SO GLAD YOU COULD COME ON SHORT NOTICE.

OF COURSE. IF WHAT YOU SAY IS TRUE...THIS MAY BE SOMETHING I'VE BEEN LOOKING FOR FOR A *VERY* LONG TIME.

OH, IT'S REAL ALL RIGHT. I COULDN'T BELIEVE IT *MYSELF* WHEN I SAW IT.

HOW DO YOU KNOW IT'S AUTHENTIC?

AS I SAID ON THE PHONE, IN MY YOUTH I WAS PART OF THE SCIENCE TEAM THAT HELPED DEVELOP EQUIPMENT FOR THE *SUPERHUMAN* COMMUNITY.

SO I AM *CERTAIN*, MS. WEBER.

THIS CAME FROM *COLONEL WEIRD'S* SHIP!

# BLACK HAMMER

## NO.4 COMICS



ABRAHAM SLAM IN THE GRIPS OF CTHU-LOU!

SPIRAL CITY. THE LOWER EAST SIDE.

for the U.S. ARMY ENLIST NOW

RECRUIT

WAR BOND

I'M SORRY, MR. SLAMKOWSKI, BUT YOU ARE UNFIT FOR SERVICE.

B-BUT I GOTTA GET OVERSEAS AND HELP TAKE IT TO THOSE FILTHY NAZIS, DOC! PLEASE! I MAY BE SKINNY, BUT I CAN *FIGHT* AS GOOD AS ANYONE! I JUST *KNOW* I CAN!

I ADMIRE YOUR GUMPTION, SON, BUT YOU DIDN'T PASS A *SINGLE* ELEMENT OF THE PHYSICAL. YOU'RE NEAR-SIGHTED, AS *THIN* AS A TOOTHPICK, AND YOUR LUNGS ARE WEAK. MAYBE YOU CAN FIND A WAY TO HELP UNCLE SAM HERE AT HOME, HMM?

WHAT'S THE MATTER, PIPSQUEAK? DID YA STRIKE OUT WITH THE NURSE?

HA!

I-I CAN'T BELIEVE THE ARMY WOULDN'T TAKE ME. I'VE ALREADY BEEN TURNED DOWN BY THE NAVY *AND* AIR FORCE. ALL I WANNA DO IS GET TO EUROPE AND FIGHT.

WHY SO GLUM, CHUM?

HUH? AW, SORRY, MISTER... I JUST WANNA BE ALONE.

THE ARMY WON'T TAKE ME. I'M ABOUT AS *USELESS* AS IT GETS.

WELL, IT SOUNDS TO ME LIKE YOU'VE ALREADY *GIVEN UP* THERE, BOY. YOU REALLY WANNA FIGHT, YOU GOTTA LEARN HOW TO TAKE A FEW PUNCHES.

WHATTA *YOU* KNOW ABOUT IT?

SOCKLINGHAM BOXING GYM

I CAN TEACH YOU HOW TO FIGHT. MIGHT EVEN BE ABLE TO HELP YOU PUT A FEW *POUNDS* ON THEM CLOTHES HANGERS YOU CALL SHOULDERS.

PUNCH SOCKLINGHAM.

ABRAHAM SLAMKOWSKI. REAL NICE TO *MEET'CHA*. CAN YOU REALLY HELP ME GET IN SHAPE? TEACH ME TO FIGHT?

THAT DEPENDS... YOU READY TO PUT IN THE HARD WORK, ABE?

"YOU BET I AM!"

# SLAM BAM THANK YOU, MA'AM!

WOW, PUNCH, I CAN'T BELIEVE YOU WERE REALLY A ***HEAVYWEIGHT*** CONTENDER!

SURE WAS, ABE. WITH A NAME LIKE MINE, I WAS ***BORN*** TO FIGHT. JUST LIKE YOU.

SLAMKOWSKI?

***SLAM***...ABRAHAM SLAM. IT'S GOT A NICE RING TO IT! AND YOU'VE COME A ***LONG WAY*** FROM THE WALKING BEANPOLE THAT I MET ON THE STREET ALL THOSE MONTHS AGO.

YOU COULD FIGHT ***ANYONE*** NOW, ABE.

***SOCKLINGHAM***--YOU AND YOUR GIRL-FRIEND DONE TOWELING EACH OTHER OFF YET?

PUNCH, WHO ***IS*** THAT?!

QUIET, ABE--***STAY HERE!***

TELL MR. OLSEN I'LL HAVE THE MONEY NEXT *FRIDAY.* I GUARANTEE IT!

YOUR WORD IS *MUD* AROUND HERE, SOCKLING-HAM!

PUNCH?

TIME'S *UP,* PUNCH!

BOSS TOLD US TO *PUNCH* YOUR TICKET! HA!

*BLAM!*

*PUNCH!!!*

AND WHAT DO WE HAVE *HERE?* PUNCH'S LITTLE GIRLFRIEND GOT SOMETHING TO SAY?

CAN'T LEAVE NO WITNESSES, OTTER!

YOU ROTTEN *BASTARDS!*

*THWAP!*

YOU'LL NEVER GET AWAY WITH THIS!

*POW!*

HOLD ON, PUNCH! I'LL CALL AN AMBULANCE!

T-TOO LATE, ABE--BUT NOT FOR YOU...

WH-WHATTA YOU MEAN?

YOU GOT MORE *HEART* THAN ANYONE I'VE EVER SEEN, KID. NEVER STOP...N-NEVER STOP FIGHTING...

PUNCH IS RIGHT...MAYBE I MISSED OUT ON THE FIGHT OVERSEAS, BUT THIS JUST PROVES THERE'S STILL PLENTY I CAN DO BACK HERE AT *HOME.*

I'LL USE MY TRAINING TO TRACK DOWN THIS NEFARIOUS *MR. OLSEN* AND ALL THE OTHER THUGS LIKE HIM THAT ARE TAKING OVER SPIRAL CITY...

...BUT NOT AS ABE SLAMKOWSKI. NO, CRIMINALS AND NO-GOODERS WILL COME TO FEAR ME BY *ANOTHER* NAME...

ABRAHAM SLAM!

YO! EARTH TO ABE!

HUH?

WHAT IS IT, GAIL?

WHERE IS MY *FAVORITE* BLACK T-SHIRT?

HOW SHOULD *I* KNOW? ASK TALKY-WALKY.

ABE! AS MUCH AS YOU LIKE TO THINK OF ME AS YOUR HOUSE-KEEPER, IT IS *NOT MY WEEK FOR LAUNDRY.* IT'S BAD ENOUGH I HAVE TO COOK FOR THIS--THIS *WOMAN* TONIGHT.

SHE'S NOT JUST SOME WOMAN, TALKY--THIS IS *TAMMY TRUEHEART* WE'RE TALKING ABOUT...ABE'S MAIN SQUEEZE. HIS SWEETHEART. SHE MIGHT EVEN BE *THE ONE,* RIGHT, ABRAHAM?

I MEAN, NONE OF US HAVE EVER BROUGHT ANYONE HOME TO MEET THE FAM BEFORE. THIS IS *BIG!*

ARE YOU TWO GOING STEADY, ABE? DID YOU GIVE HER YOUR HOMECOMING PIN? ARE YOU GOING TO PROM TOGETHER?

I'M GLAD YOU FIND THIS *AMUSING,* BARBIE.

OH, I DO. I REALLY, *REALLY* DO.

YOUR T-SHIRT IS PROBABLY IN THE PILE IN THE BASEMENT, GAIL. YOU'LL HAVE TO CLEAN IT YOURSELF. AND REMEMBER, DINNER IS AT SIX! *DO NOT BE LATE!*

WHATEVER...

...LIKE I CARE WHAT *TITTY TAMMY HOSE BAG* THINKS.

YOU COULD HELP TOO, YOU KNOW! THERE'S A LOT TO GET READY.

I *AM* HELPING. I'M READING A BOOK SO THAT I CAN ENRICH MY *MIND* AND MAKE STIMULATING DINNER CONVERSATION WITH TITTY TAMMY.

*DON'T CALL HER THAT!*

OH, SORRY, IT JUST NIPPED OUT--OH, I MEAN *SLIPPED* OUT.

:SIGH:

ABRAHAM--STOP WORRYING. HONESTLY, I'VE SEEN YOU GO HEAD TO HEAD WITH COSMIC DESPOTS AND YOU'VE NEVER LOOKED *THIS* NERVOUS BEFORE.

I--I JUST *REALLY LIKE HER,* BARBIE. I JUST WANT THIS DINNER TO GO WELL.

AND IT WILL. I PROMISE. I'LL BE ON MY BEST BEHAVIOR, AND SO WILL GAIL. WHAT COULD *POSSIBLY* GO WRONG?

SHRACK

OH SWEET CHRIST. I'M DOOMED.

:SNORT!:

--oh, hello, Abraham. Why are you on the ceiling?

Oh--that's better.

LOOK, COLONEL, I HAVE A FAVOR TO ASK.

Of course, Abraham... anything.

WELL, I'M HAVING A FRIEND OVER FOR DINNER TONIGHT...A LADY FRIEND, AND I--

Oh. That's wonderful. I'd very much like to meet her.

WELL, THAT'S JUST IT, COLONEL. I DON'T THINK SHE WOULD UNDERSTAND. I MEAN--

Me? You're worried about me, Abe? I assure you I can play my part. I'll be your son, Randy. Just like always.

:AHEM:--WELL, COLONEL, TO BE FRANK, I'M NOT SURE WE CAN ***TRUST*** YOU TO PLAY THE PART.

I'D REALLY APPRECIATE IT IF YOU--WELL, IF YOU DON'T COME TO DINNER TONIGHT. JUST IN CASE. MAYBE STAY IN THE ***PARA-ZONE?*** OR IN THE BARN WITH TALKY?

Oh... I see.

IT'S JUST THAT--WELL, YOU HAVEN'T EXACTLY BEEN ***YOURSELF*** LATELY.

Of course, Abraham...I understand. Don't worry... I won't embarrass you.

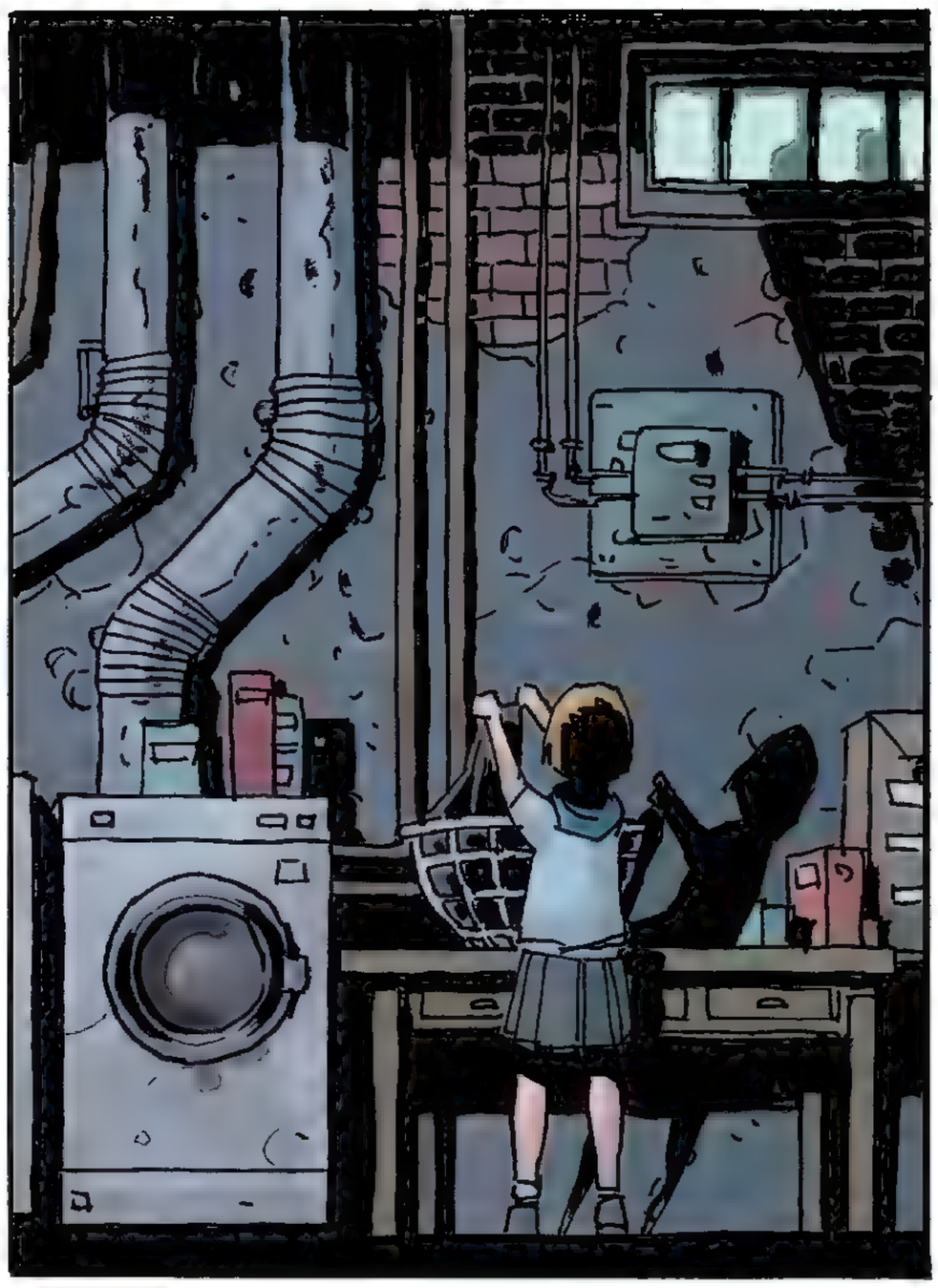
THAT'S NOT WHAT I--

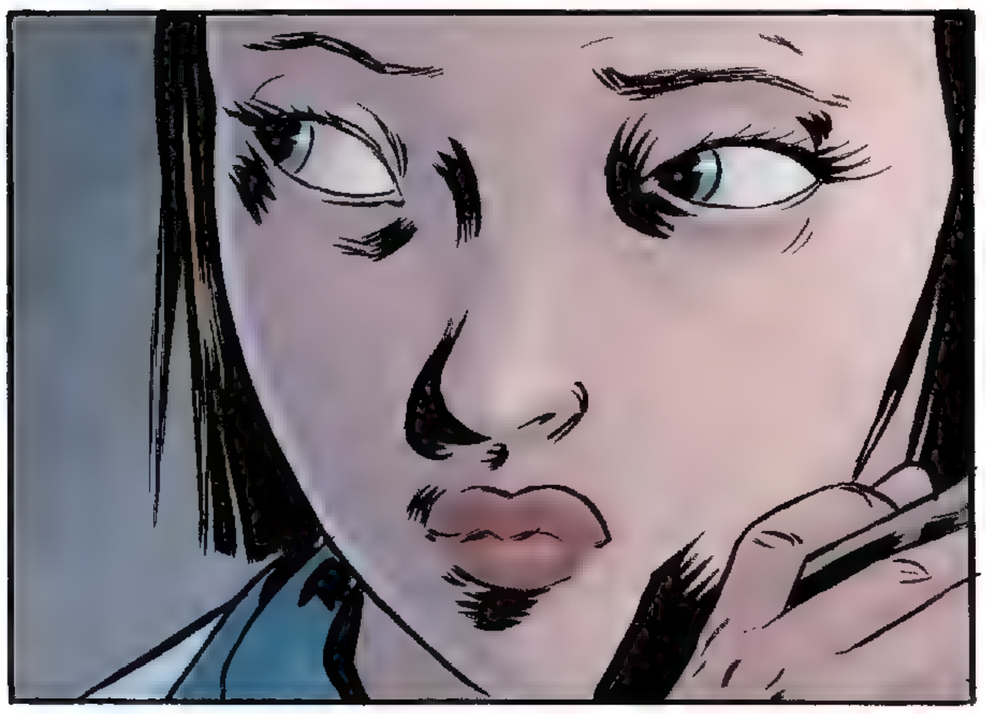
WHAT?

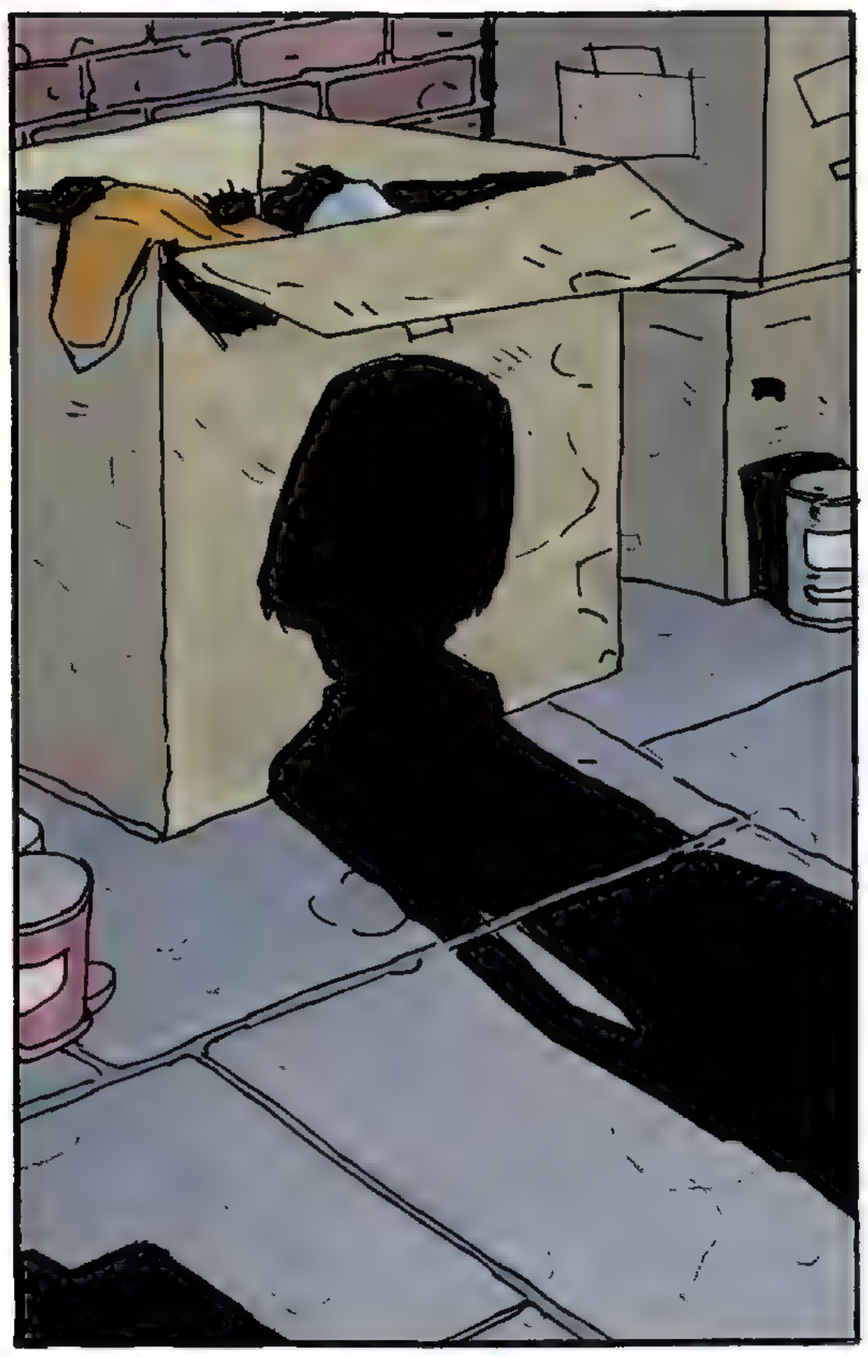
YOU ***KNOW*** WHAT. YOU WERE A LITTLE HARD ON HIM, WEREN'T YOU, ABE?

A LITTLE TOUGH LOVE NEVER HURT ***ANYONE,*** BARBIE.

SURE, ABE... WHATEVER YOU SAY.







:SIGH:
BARBIE...

FORKS ON THE OTHER SIDE, ABRAHAM! HOW MANY TIMES MUST I TELL YOU?!

RIGHT--RIGHT, GOT IT. LOOK, YOU SHOULD GET MOVING OUT TO THE *BARN*. TAMMY WILL BE HERE SOON.

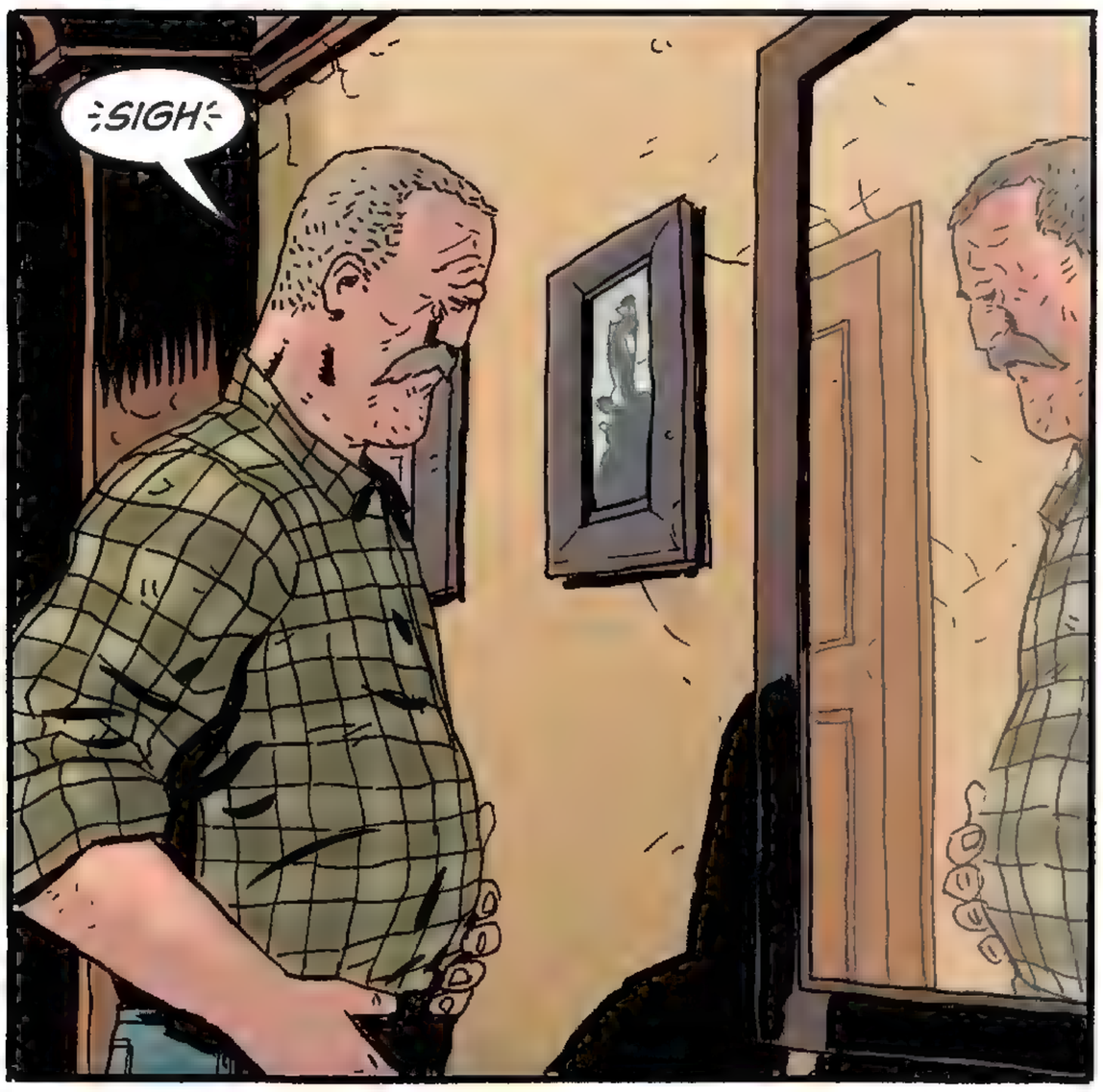
THIS IS SO DEMEANING. I COOK THE DINNER AND THEN I HAVE TO GO HIDE IN THE BARN LIKE SOME... SOME *ANIMAL*.

NOT YOU *TOO*, TALKY...SERIOUSLY, I'VE HAD ABOUT ENOUGH DRAMA.

BLEEP-BLOOP! I AM SORRY, MASTER-- BLEEP! I AM JUST A LOYAL ROBOT. I LIVE TO SERVE MY HUMAN OVERLORDS-- BEEP-BLOOP-BEEP!

:SIGH:

R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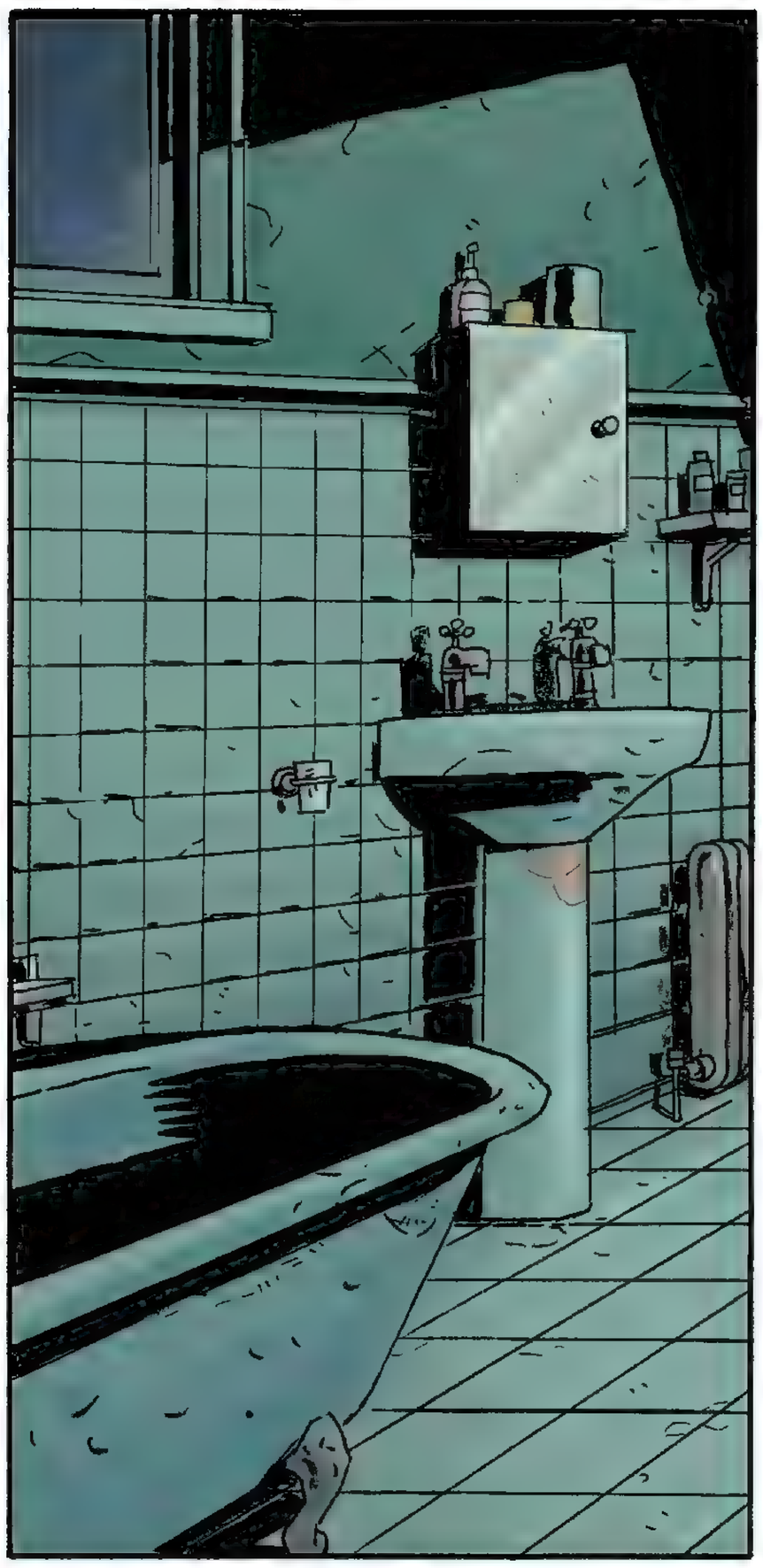
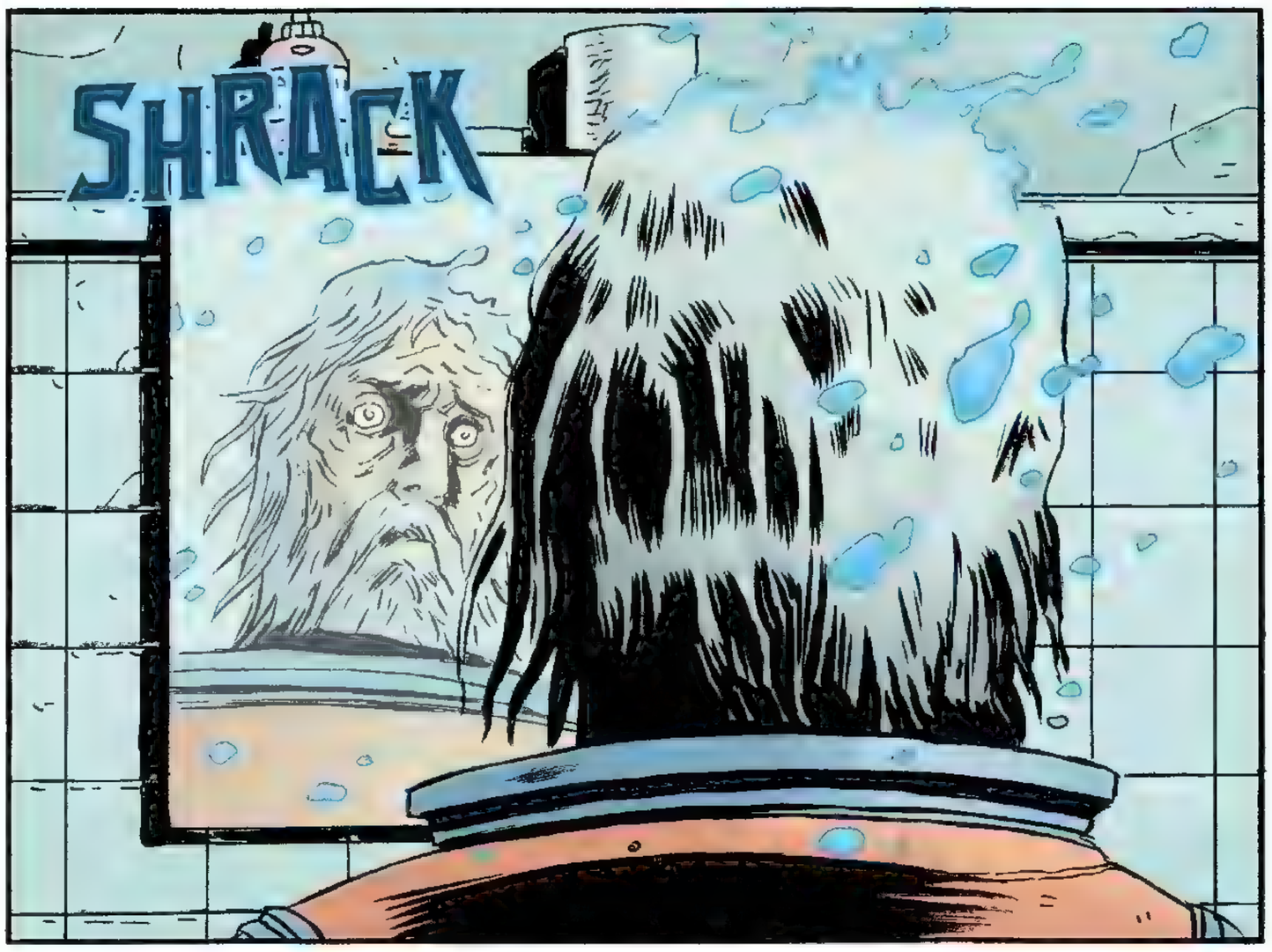
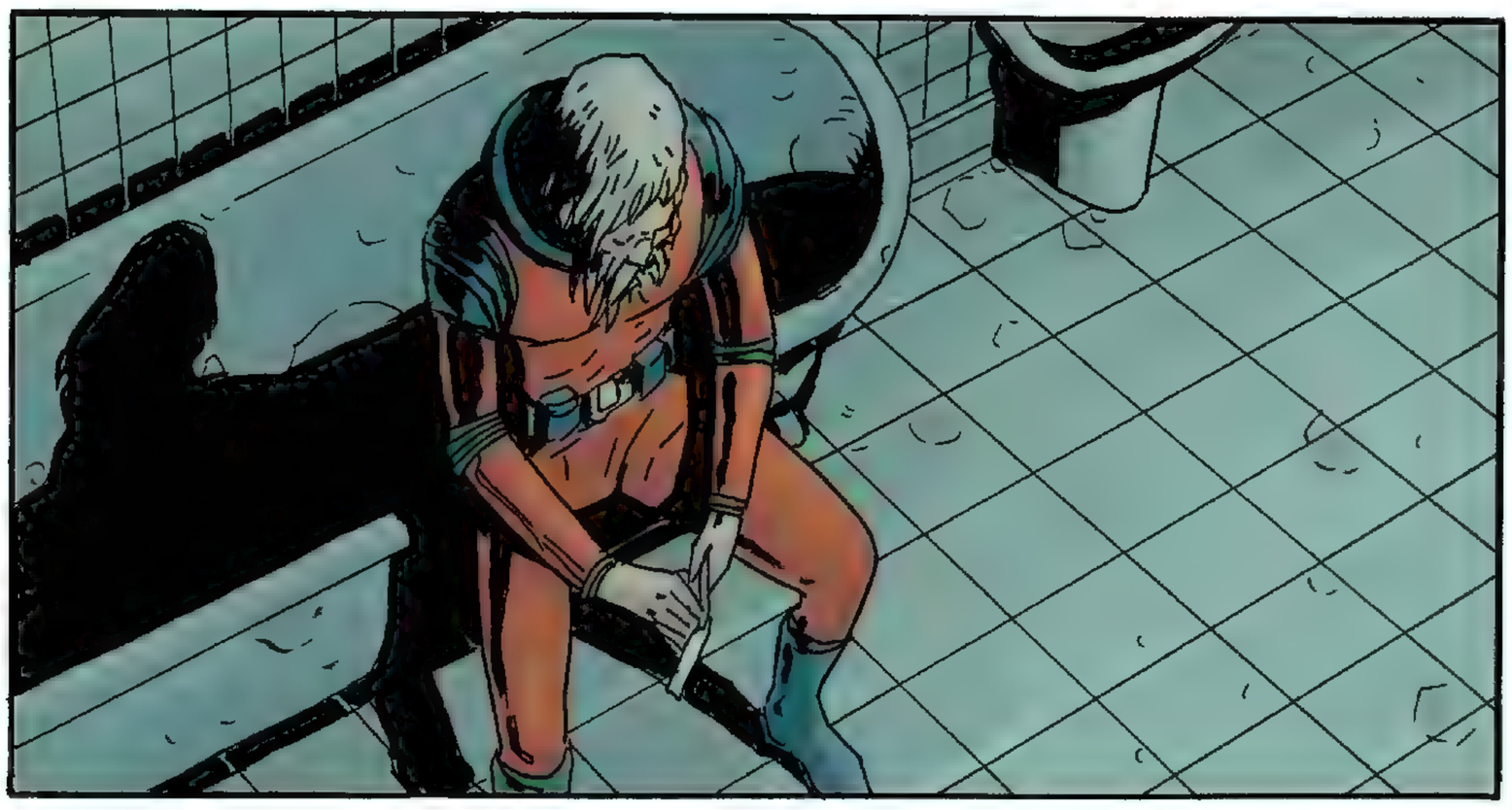



SHRACK



KNOCK KNOCK

HEY THERE, BEAUTIFUL.

HEY, YOU OLD CHARMER. I BROUGHT PIE. APPLE.

YOU ARE A GOOD ONE, TAMMY TRUEHEART. COME IN.

RELAX, ABE. I'M THE ONE WHO'S SUPPOSED TO BE NERVOUS.

HEH. SORRY.

TAMMY, SO GLAD YOU COULD MAKE IT FOR DINNER.

HELLO, MARK. SOMETHING SMELLS GOOD.

AH, YES, I'VE BEEN COOKING ALL DAY.

=AHEM= SO, UH, HAVE YOU SEEN GAIL, MARK? SHE SHOULD BE DOWN HERE BY NOW.

I THINK SHE WAS JUST--

I'M RIGHT *HERE*, GRANDPA.

WHEN'S ***DINNER?*** I'M REALLY FUCKING HUNGRY.

the BLACK LAMPS

GAIL! THAT IS ***ENOUGH*** OF THAT LANGUAGE! AND WHAT ON EARTH ARE YOU WEARING?!

JUST SOME OF MOMMY'S MAKEUP, GRANDPA. SHE SAID I COULD. DON'T YOU THINK I LOOK PRETTY?

GET UPSTAIRS AND WIPE THAT OFF RIGHT ***NOW!***

WHY ARE YOU SO ANGRY, GRANDPA? YOU KNOW I DON'T LIKE IT WHEN YOU ***YELL*** AT ME LIKE THIS!

RELAX, ABE. SHE'S JUST HAVING FUN.

I THINK YOU LOOK GREAT, GAIL. BESIDES...***I'M*** PRETTY FUCKING HUNGRY TOO.

IT'S DELICIOUS, MARK!

WHY, THANK YOU...I SLAVED OVER THE STOVE ALL DAY.

ISN'T YOUR *DAUGHTER* JOINING US, ABE?

:AHEM: WELL...

...MY DAUGHTER ISN'T FEELING TOO WELL...

"...SHE DECIDED IT WOULD BE BEST TO STAY IN *BED*, SO AS WE DON'T CATCH IT."

MY MOMMY IS SICK A LOT. SHE STAYS IN HER ROOM *ALL* THE TIME.

GAIL, HONEY, THAT'S NOT REALLY TRUE. I WOULDN'T SAY--

THAT'S *TERRIBLE*. HAS SHE SEEN ANYONE? A DOCTOR?

NO...I THINK SHE'S MOSTLY SICK BECAUSE MY *DADDY* IS NEVER HOME.

WHERE *IS* RANDALL, ABE? DIDN'T YOU SAY HE WAS TRAVELING WITH WORK?

AH, YES. MY SON IS A BUSY MAN. HE'S ACTUALLY GONE BACK HOME TO OUR OLD PLACE FOR A BIT.

AND YOU ALL CAME HERE FROM SOMEWHERE IN CANADA, AGAIN?

SASKATCHEWAN.

MONTREAL.

WELL, YES, SASKATCHEWAN, BUT I WENT TO UNIVERSITY IN MONTREAL.

REALLY? WHAT DID YOU STUDY?

UNCLE MARK STUDIED TO BE A ***PRIEST.*** BUT HE GOT KICKED OUT OF THE CHURCH ON ACCOUNT OF HIS DRINKING AND HAVING AN AFFAIR WITH A ***NUN.*** RIGHT, UNCLE MARK?

GAIL, THAT'S NOT--

WHAT, UNCLE MARK? YOU TOLD ME I ALWAYS HAD TO TELL THE TRUTH, REMEMBER?

***CUT IT OUT,*** GAIL!

D-D- DON'T YELL, UNCLE MARK.

:AHEM: MARK, MAYBE WE SHOULD--

BUT, GRANDPA, UNCLE MARK SHOULDN'T BE ASHAMED. HE'S ***ALMOST*** SOBER AGAIN.

AND HE EVEN WENT BACK TO CHURCH YESTERDAY.

***SHUT UP, GAIL!***

...

**WHAM!**

WOULD YOU TWO ***PLEASE*** JUST--

STOP IT RIGHT THERE!

I AM THE MANY-ANGLED ONE...THE DARK SON OF CARCOSA. YOUR ANCESTORS CALLED ME **BIN TOT SOKUM TIK.** BUT YOU CAN CALL ME...

STHU-LOU!

THOOM

I KNOW EXACTLY WHO YOU ARE--***DR. LOUIS LOVE.*** YOU'RE A BIOLOGY PROFESSOR AT SPIRAL UNIVERSITY.

YOU SPLICED YOUR ***DNA*** TOGETHER WITH A RADIOACTIVE ***OCTOPUS*** AND WENT ***BONKERS,*** KILLING SIX OF YOUR GRAD STUDENTS.

AND YOU HAVE TO ***PAY*** FOR THOSE DEATHS, DOCTOR!

YOU KNOW NOTHING, ABRAHAM SLAM! THE BODY OF DR. LOUIS LOVE IS MERELY MY VESSEL...I WILL STERILIZE THIS PLANET AND REPOPULATE IT WITH MY SPAWN!

THWAP

AND YOU SHALL BE THE ***NEXT*** TO DIE!

:CGK!:

KRA-KOOM

I DON'T ***THINK*** SO, SQUID-BREATH!

BLACK HAMMER?!

ABRAHAM. THIS ONE'S A LITTLE OUT OF YOUR **WEIGHT CLASS,** DON'T YOU THINK?

I WAS MANAGING JUST FINE!

REALLY? DIDN'T LOOK LIKE IT TO ME, GRANDPA.

NOW LISTEN HERE--

NO. **YOU** LISTEN TO **ME,** ABRAHAM.

TIMES ARE CHANGING. IT'S NOT THE NINETEEN FORTIES ANYMORE. THIS IS **NINETEEN SEVENTY-NINE.** IN CASE YOU HAVEN'T NOTICED, THE WORLD IS IN CHAOS.

IT'S NOT JUST STREET GANGS AND BANK ROBBERS ANYMORE. THE THREATS ARE GETTING ***BIGGER AND MORE DEADLY*** ALL THE TIME.

I HAVE ENOUGH TO DEAL WITH, WITHOUT HAVING TO ***BABYSIT YOU.***

MAYBE IT'S TIME YOU THOUGHT ABOUT HANGING UP THE ***MASK,*** OLD MAN.

GRANDPA, HOW COME SHERIFF TRUEHEART'S WIFE IS HERE ***WITHOUT*** HIM?

WHY ISN'T SHE EATING DINNER WITH ***HER HUSBAND,*** GRANDPA?

THAT'S VERY ***RUDE,*** GAIL. YOU ***APOLOGIZE*** TO MRS. TRUEHEART RIGHT THIS MINUTE!

COLONEL?!

COLONEL? ABE, YOU DIDN'T TELL ME YOUR SON WAS IN THE ARMY!

AIR FORCE, ACTUALLY, MA'AM. CANADIAN AIR FORCE. IT'S WHY I HAVE TO TRAVEL SO MUCH, I'M AFRAID.

NOW, GAIL, HONEY...I STILL DON'T BELIEVE I'VE HEARD YOU APOLOGIZE TO OUR GUEST.

S-SORRY, DAD.

AND, UH... *SORRY,* MRS. TRUEHEART.

IT'S ALL RIGHT, HONEY. I KNOW HOW HARD IT IS SOMETIMES TO HAVE A STRANGER IN THE HOUSE.

MM! THIS SMELLS ABSOLUTELY DELICIOUS!

IS THIS YOUR OLD RECIPE, BROTHER? THE WAY I USED TO LIKE IT?

UH, YES. YES, IT IS.

I THINK THIS DESERVES A TOAST. TO OUR *LOVELY GUEST.*

WE'RE SO HAPPY YOU AND DAD HAVE FOUND EACH OTHER.

*AREN'T* WE, GAIL, HONEY?

UH...YEAH.

WELL, ABE...HE CERTAINLY HAS YOUR CHARM.

CAREFUL, DAD--I MIGHT HAVE TO STEAL THIS ONE!

WELL, THAT WENT JUST ABOUT AS GOOD AS I EXPECTED.

IT WAS GREAT.

I'M SORRY ABOUT ALL THAT WITH GAIL. SHE HASN'T BEEN HERSELF LATELY.

IT WAS FINE, ABE. REALLY. *SHE'S JUST A KID.* GO EASY ON HER.

YEAH, WELL, AND SORRY ABOUT MARK TOO. HE--

ABE, QUIT APOLOGIZING FOR YOUR FAMILY.

I KNOW, I JUST--

YOU JUST *NOTHING.*

EVERYONE'S FAMILY IS A LITTLE NUTS. THEY WOULDN'T BE FAMILY IF THEY WEREN'T.

AND I LIKE YOURS. A LOT.

YEAH?

YEAH. SO YOU BETTER GET READY BECAUSE THIS WAS THE FIRST OF *MANY* DINNERS.

AND NEXT TIME I'M SLEEPING OVER.

DON'T WRITE ANY CHECKS YOUR ASS CAN'T *CASH,* SWEETHEART.

I NEVER DO, OLD MAN.

...MOTHER... FUCKER.

YOU BACKSTABBING MOTHERFUCKER.

WHAT AM I GONNA DO WITH YOU, OLD MAN? DON'T KNOW YET, BUT IT AIN'T GONNA BE NICE.

SHHRGK

WHAT AM I GOING TO DO WITH YOU, SHERIFF...? I DON'T KNOW YET... BUT IT WON'T BE NICE.

SPIRAL CITY. NOW.

I REALLY APPRECIATE YOU TAKING THE TIME TO SEE ME, DOC. I KNOW YOU'RE RETIRED.

SEMIRETIRED, LUCY, DEAR. PLUS I WAS A FRIEND OF YOUR FATHER'S. YOU KNOW I'D DO ANY-THING FOR YOU.

FRIEND? I'D SAY YOU WERE MORE THAN MY FATHER'S FRIEND.

YOU'RE DR. JIMMY ROBINSON... ***DOCTOR STAR!*** MY DAD LOVED YOU.

AH, I MAY STILL WORK IN THE OBSERVATORY FROM TIME TO TIME, BUT ***THOSE*** DAYS ARE BEHIND ME, DEAR.

NOW THEN--AS I SAID ON THE PHONE, THE COORDINATES YOU GAVE ME...THE ONES THAT ***NASA*** CALCULATED THE PROBE'S TRAJECTORY BACK TO...THERE WAS NOTHING THERE. JUST AS NASA SAID.

HOWEVER, AS YOU KNOW, MY COSMIC-POWERED TELESCOPE CAN SEE THINGS EVEN NASA ***CAN'T.***

YOU ***FOUND*** SOMETHING UP THERE?!

SEE FOR YOURSELF, LUCY.

MY ***GOD!*** IS THAT--?!

***YES.*** IT IS...

"...IT'S A ***DOORWAY!***"

DARK HORSE COMICS®

# BLACK HAMMER

No.5

APPROVED BY THE COSMIC CODE COMMITTEE

## COL. WEIRD

## PULLED INTO THE PARA-ZONE!

ROSS INFANTINO

# THE ODYSSEY OF RANDALL WEIRD

The Para-Zone.

A place beyond places.
A time beyond times.

I have looked into the face of pure darkness.

Not evil...

...no, more like nature turned BLACK.

I am SORRY, Gail.

I was... just passing by. Please excuse me.

They know. I think they KNOW!

There is a design to it all.

But I cannot manipulate it. I cannot change that design.

I am as helpless to follow its curves and angles as YOU are.

--ALMOST DONE HERE, MISSION CONTROL. SHOULD BE WRAPPING THINGS UP AND HEADING BACK WITHIN THE HOUR.

THAT MAY BE A RATHER GENEROUS ESTIMATE, COLONEL. MY SENSORS ARE PICKING UP UNKNOWN LIFE FORMS, APPROACHING FAST!

I THOUGHT THE ALIEN RACE ON THIS PLANET WAS EXTINCT, TALKY?!

ｿﾝｶﾊﾟｷｭｲ..!!

SO DID I, COLONEL. IT SEEMS NASA'S INTEL WAS INCORRECT.

LET'S DO SOMETHING ABOUT THAT, SHALL WE, OL' CHUM?

K-ZAP

ZZZOW

CHOOM

ALMOST SEEMED LIKE THEY WERE TRYING TO PUSH US BACK FROM THAT CAVE. I WONDER WHAT THEY'RE HIDING IN THERE?

A CRUDE CAVE DRAWING, COLONEL. SHOULD I RECORD IT AND SEND THE IMAGE BACK TO MISSION CONTROL ON EARTH?

YES, BUT I DON'T THINK IT'S JUST A DRAWING, ***TALKY-WALKY***...I THINK IT'S A MAP!

***NASA***, THIS IS COLONEL RANDALL WEIRD. WE HAVE FOUND WHAT APPEARS TO BE A STAR CHART ON ***VIRIUS-6***. REQUESTING PERMISSION TO INVESTIGATE FURTHER.

:KTZZ: ***AFFIRMATIVE***, COLONEL. REQUEST GRANTED.

--BUT YOU BETTER MAKE IT BACK HERE BEFORE ***NEW YEAR'S***. I DON'T INTEND TO BRING IN 1956 ALONE.

YOU ***GOT*** IT, EVE. I'LL BE HOME SOON. PROMISE.

HUMPH. I DON'T UNDERSTAND WHY YOU WASTE YOUR TIME WITH EVE ARGO, COLONEL. SHE IS SO...

HUMAN?

WHAT IS THAT SUPPOSED TO MEAN?

YOU KNOW *EXACTLY* WHAT IT MEANS, TALKY, OL' GAL. WE'VE BEEN OVER THIS. MUCH AS I VALUE YOUR COMPANIONSHIP OUT HERE IN SPACE, I--I...

COLONEL?

RANDALL... WHAT IS IT?

HUH.

NOTHING, I GUESS...

...THOUGHT I SAW SOMETHING FOR A SECOND. LIKE SOMEONE *WATCHING* US.

MY SENSORS ARE PICKING UP NO OTHER LIFE FORMS ON THIS PLANET, COLONEL.

IT WAS NOTHING. JUST MY *IMAGINATION* PLAYING TRICKS ON ME AGAIN.

LET'S GET GOING, WALKY. I WANT TO INVESTIGATE THAT MAP AND THEN GO HOME!

...Madame Dragonfly...I--I DO NOT like it in here.

There are--too many rooms.

MORE THAN YOU KNOW, COLONEL WEIRD. AND I'VE TOLD YOU BEFORE. IF YOU DON'T LIKE IT, THEN DON'T POP IN HERE LIKE THIS. IT'S CREEPY.

You're creepy.

WELL, I THINK THIS DESERVES A TOAST. TO OUR **LOVELY GUEST.** WE'RE SO HAPPY YOU AND DAD HAVE FOUND EACH OTHER. **AREN'T** WE, GAIL, HONEY?

UH... YEAH.

WELL, ABE... HE CERTAINLY HAS YOUR CHARM.

I--I REMEMBER!

...not yet. Almost there... but not quite yet.

KNOCK KNOCK

KNOCK KNOCK

217

MARK! WHAT A SURPRISE.

SORRY, FATHER. I HOPE I'M NOT INTERRUPTING ANYTHING.

NOT AT ALL. I WAS JUST PROCRASTINATING. FINDING NEW WAYS TO PUT OFF WRITING MY SERMON FOR THIS WEEKEND.

HOW CAN I ***HELP*** YOU, MARK? IS EVERYTHING ALL RIGHT?

OH, YES. EVERYTHING IS FINE. NOTHING ***WRONG*** OR ANYTHING LIKE THAT. I JUST...

WELL, I WAS PASSING BY THE CHURCH AND SAW THE FLIER IN THE WINDOW FOR THE CHURCH BAZAAR COMING UP AT THE END OF THE MONTH, AND I THOUGHT ***MAYBE***--IF YOU NEED ANOTHER VOLUNTEER--I COULD HELP OUT. WATCH A TABLE, SELL BAKED GOODS...WHATEVER.

SORRY. STUPID OF ME TO BOTHER YOU. I'M SURE YOU ***HAVE*** ENOUGH HELP.

NO! DON'T BE SILLY. I'D BE THRILLED TO HAVE YOUR HELP!

REALLY?

YES. TRUTH IS, IT WILL BE NICE TO HAVE SOMEONE TO WORK WITH ***OTHER*** THAN ALL THOSE EAGER OLD BIDDIES ON THE PARISH COUNCIL.

AND IF YOU TELL ANYONE I SAID THAT, I'LL ***DENY*** IT.

YOUR SECRET IS SAFE.

MORE LIKE A CONFESSION.

ACTUALLY, MAYBE YOU CAN STOP BY FOR DINNER THIS WEEK. WE CAN WORK ON THE ***FLOOR PLAN.*** I'M HAVING A HARD TIME ORGANIZING THE WHOLE THING, TO BE HONEST.

THAT--THAT WOULD BE GREAT. SHOULD I BRING ANYTHING?

I'M IRISH AND ROMAN CATHOLIC. YOU BETTER BRING ***WINE,*** OR NO WORK WILL GET DONE.

IT'S A DEAL.

WELL, I BETTER LET YOU GET BACK TO PROCRASTINATING.

YES. I SUPPOSE SO. GOOD TO SEE YOU, MARK.

YOU TOO, FATHER.

WEIRD?!

SOMEONE WILL SEE YOU! WHAT THE HELL ARE YOU DOING OUT HERE LIKE THAT?

I was... just passing by. Please excuse me.

WAIT! WERE--WERE YOU SPYING ON ME?!

LOOK--YOU BETTER GO BEFORE--

Yes. You're right. I'm sorry...

I am sorry...

THIS IS IT, TALKY... IF THAT MAP WE FOUND IS TO BE TRUSTED, **THESE** ARE THE COORDINATES THEY WERE LEADING TO.

AFFIRMATIVE, COLONEL. I HAVE CHECKED AND DOUBLE-CHECKED ALL DATA. THIS IS THE SPOT...

...BUT I AM SENSING NOTHING OUT OF THE ORDINARY. PERHAPS THE MAP WAS JUST FOLKLORE OF THE INDIGENOUS ALIENS. PERHAPS IT MEANT NOTHING AT ALL.

MAYBE... BUT WE CAME ALL THIS WAY, TALKY.

"I THINK I'M GOING TO GET A CLOSER LOOK."

:KZZT: DO YOU SEE ANYTHING, COLONEL?

NO. NOTHING. BUT I HAVE TO SAY, TALKY...I DO FEEL **STRANGE** ALL OF A SUDDEN.

--OLONEL :ZZT: HAPPENING :ZZT:--ET AWAY--

I--I SEE IT.

IT--IT'S A DOORWAY!

--NOT A GOOD IDEA :KZZT:

MY GOD! WALKY--IT'S... IT'S...

WHO... WHO ARE YOU?

I am YOU.

SHRRRKZZ

WHAT?! THE PANEL IS CLOSING, TALKY! NO!

TALKY?! TALKY--HELP ME!

She can't hear you.

EVERYONE! WE CAN TAKE HIM IF WE WORK TOGETHER!

Together? NOTHING stands against ANTI-GOD. Nothing and NO ONE!

Not true.

RANDY?

RANDALL?! IS THAT YOU?

EVE?!

I've been WAITING for this.

IT--IT CAN'T BE... YOU CAN'T BE REAL!

It's ME, Eve. I'm here.

BUT--HOW?! WE ALL THOUGHT YOU WERE DEAD!

No... not dead. not YET.

What... what year is it?

1964. YOU'VE BEEN GONE ALMOST NINE YEARS. WE THOUGHT--WE THOUGHT THE RUSSIANS HAD GOTTEN YOU.

GOD-- IT *IS* YOU!

YOU-- YOU LEFT ME *ALONE*, RANDY. WHY? WHY DID YOU LEAVE?

I didn't mean to. I was lost...I *AM* lost.

WHAT DO YOU MEAN, YOU *ARE* LOST? YOU'RE RIGHT HERE.

No...I'm not. I have to go now. I have something that I need to do.

BUT YOU JUST *GOT* HERE!

WHY CAN'T YOU JUST *STAY*?

There is a *DESIGN* to it all. But I cannot manipulate it. I cannot change that design. I am as helpless to follow its curves and angles as you are.

Goodbye, Eve. *I LOVE YOU*...

...always.

AAHHH!!

WHAT ARE YOU *DOING*?! YOU *CAN'T* JUST POP INTO MY *ROOM* LIKE THAT! WHAT IF I WAS *NAKED* OR SOMETHING, YOU *PERV*?!

But you were not.

YES--BUT I COULD HAVE BEEN!

But I knew that you were not.

NOT THE *POINT*, WEIRDO!

I also knew that you have been thinking about me. That you wanted to talk to me. was I wrong?

H-HOW DID YOU KNOW *THAT*?!

I...it is hard to explain.

See how it spins. Again and again. Around and around. Like everything. Like *THIS* moment.

GOD! YOU ARE ***SUCH A FREAK,*** COLONEL. I MEAN A BONA FIDE WHACK-JOB! ONE MINUTE YOU'RE SHOWING UP AT ABE'S ***DINNER PARTY,*** ALL CLEAN CUT AND SANE, THE NEXT MINUTE YOU'RE TALKING ABOUT CRAZY FUCKING SHIT AND CREEPING AROUND MY ROOM!

You wanted to speak to me. There is something you wanted to ask me.

I CANNOT.

...

AS A MATTER OF FACT, THERE ***IS!*** I WAS JUST SITTING HERE THINKING...WHY HAVEN'T ***YOU*** TRIED TO RESCUE US? WHY HAVEN'T YOU GOTTEN US OFF THIS FUCKING FARM?!

BUT ***YOU*** CAN LEAVE! YOU CAN STILL POP IN AND OUT OF THAT DAMNED ***PARA-ZONE*** WHENEVER YOU WANT.

SO...WHY DON'T YOU BRING US HOME? WHY DON'T YOU BRING US HOME ***THROUGH THE PARA-ZONE?!***

I--I cannot. You would not survive the journey. None of you would.

I first entered the Para-Zone at a specific time and space that somehow made me able to survive... and even that...

...even THAT took its toll on my mind.

BUT I'M *WILLING* TO TAKE THE RISK, RANDY!

I DON'T CARE IF IT KILLS ME. I CAN'T STAY HERE ANYMORE--NOT LIKE *THIS!* HOW DO YOU KNOW WE WON'T SURVIVE UNLESS *WE TRY?!*

Because I *DID* try...once before...A woman pleaded with me to take her with me, just like you are now. And she--

I am sorry, Gail, but I will *NOT* take you through the Para-Zone. I cannot.

DON'T YOU LEAVE! I'M NOT DONE TALKING TO YOU YET! THERE *HAS* TO BE A WAY, COLONEL!

THERE HAS TO BE A WAY!!

Are you SURE, Eve? I still do not think this is a good idea.

YES! I--I WANT TO COME WITH YOU-- EXPLORE THE PARA-ZONE. I DON'T WANT TO BE ALONE HERE ANYMORE...AND I DON'T WANT YOU TO BE ALONE, EITHER.

No! NO, Eve--don't DO THIS...not THIS TIME!

PLEASE...

HERE WE GO!

I...just had the strangest sense of déjà vu...

NO!!

I can't-- can't see it happen. Not again.

AARRGHH!

EVE!

COLONEL?

A-Abraham.

ARE YOU OKAY, COLONEL?

I...I am fine.

WELL, YOU'RE JUST IN TIME FOR THE SUNSET. GRAB A BEER AND CATCH THE SHOW WITH ME?

The sunset. Yes...this is the most beautiful sunset I will ever see.

I will join you.

PULL UP A SEAT.

YOU KNOW, I NEVER GOT A CHANCE TO THANK YOU. FOR LAST NIGHT.

Last night?

DINNER. WITH TAMMY.

Ah. Yes. That was last night?

YEAH, IT WAS. HEY, HOW COME YOUR BEARD IS BACK?

Sometimes... my mind wanders. As does time.

UH-HUH. WELL, YOU REALLY SAVED MY ASS.

It was my pleasure, Abraham.

JUST LOOK AT THAT. THIS PLACE ISN'T ***SO BAD,*** IS IT, COLONEL? I MEAN, IN THE GRAND SCHEME OF THINGS?

No, Abraham...

...not in the grand scheme of things.

ORMSTON

DARK HORSE COMICS®

# BLACK HAMMER

NO.6

HELLO, DEAR READER. I SEE THAT YOU'VE COME BACK FOR MORE. IT SEEMS YOUR THIRST FOR MY ***DARK TALES*** AND ***SECRETS OF THE NIGHT*** IS UNQUENCHABLE.

WELL, WHO AM I TO JUDGE? WELCOME, THEN...WELCOME BACK, LOST SOULS AND DARK TRAVELERS.

BUT I WARN YOU...WHAT YOU ARE ABOUT TO EXPERIENCE IS ***NO ORDINARY*** NIGHTMARE. NO...THIS IS A ***DIFFERENT KIND*** OF STORY.

YOU SEE, THIS IS A STORY OF ***YOUR BELOVED HOST HERSELF***...AND OF THAT VILE ABODE OF FEAR AND REVULSION I CALL ***HOME.***

IT'S NOT TOO LATE TO STOP. SIMPLY ***CLOSE THIS MAGAZINE.*** SEAL IT IN PLASTIC AND ***NEVER OPEN IT AGAIN!***

NO? STILL HERE? VERY WELL... THERE IS NO TURNING BACK NOW. WELCOME, THEN...WELCOME TO

# THE CABIN OF HORRORS!

"IT STARTED ON A NIGHT NOT UNLIKE THIS ONE. IT WAS JUST AN ORDINARY CABIN THEN. ONLY WOOD AND GLASS. A LONELY PLACE, HIDDEN FROM PRYING EYES...

"BUT WHO IS THIS THAT APPROACHES? A SIMPLE FARMER'S WIFE. SO ***NAIVE.*** DOES SHE NOT KNOW WHAT SHE IS ABOUT TO DO? DOES SHE NOT KNOW THAT HER VERY ***SOUL*** LIES MORE AND MORE IN THE BALANCE WITH EACH STEP SHE TAKES CLOSER TO THAT WRETCHED WOMB OF WOOD?"

CREEAAAAK

HELLO?

THAT IS STRANGE. I WAS SURE THE WINDOWS WERE GLOWING WITH LIGHT AS I APPROACHED, YET INSIDE IT IS ***SO DARK!***

HELLO? IS--IS ANYONE ***THERE?*** I NEED HELP.

HELP? WHO SENT YOU TO ME?

***AHH!*** W-WHERE DID YOU--?

NEVER MIND THAT, YOUNG THING. TELL ME--WHAT DO YOU WANT? WHY HAVE YOU COME HERE?

THE--THE WOMEN IN OUR VILLAGE. THEY SAID YOU COULD HELP ME...THEY SAID YOU CAN ***DO THINGS... IMPOSSIBLE THINGS.***

THESE WOMEN SHOULD KNOW BETTER THAN TO SPEAK OF ME AT ***ALL.*** BUT YOU ARE HERE NOW, SO ***SHOW*** ME. WHAT HAVE YOU BROUGHT?

IT-IT'S MY ***SON***--MY DEAR BABY BOY. HE GREW ILL AND... AND HE'S GONE. HE'S ***DEAD.***

TH-THEY SAY YOU KNOW MAGIC. THEY SAY YOU CAN BRING HIM ***BACK!*** PLEASE! I'LL DO ***ANYTHING!***

ANYTHING?

YES! HE IS MY LIFE. I--I CAN'T LIVE WITHOUT HIM! ***PLEASE!***

WHAT YOU ASK OF ME--IT IS COSTLY. YOU SEE, A LIFE MUST BE PAID FOR WITH A LIFE. AND MY LIFE HAS GONE ON FAR TOO LONG. I HAVE BEEN ***TETHERED*** TO THIS OLD CABIN...BOUND TO IT. BUT I AM OLD AND I AM TIRED. ITS MANY SECRETS WEIGH ON THESE WEAK OLD SHOULDERS.

SO I ASK YOU, YOUNG ONE, IF I GIVE YOU WHAT ***YOU WANT***-- IF I GIVE YOU A CHILD-- WILL YOU TAKE ***MY BURDEN?***

WILL YOU TAKE ***OWNERSHIP*** OF THIS OLD CABIN AND ***ALL*** THAT COMES WITH IT?

YES! IF THAT IS WHAT IT TAKES TO HAVE MY JACOB BACK--I ACCEPT.

VERY WELL--GIVE ME THE BODY.

AH, WHAT A BEAUTIFUL LITTLE THING.

WHA--?!

HA HA! THEY SUIT YOU WELL, MY DEAR. YOU SEE, THE WINGS COME WITH THE CABIN. THEY ARE THE SOURCE OF OUR POWER.

POWER?! WHAT ARE YOU TALKING ABOUT?!

ENJOY THE CABIN, MY DEAR. THERE WILL BE SOMETHING NEW WAITING FOR YOU BEHIND EVERY DOOR.

BUT--WHERE ARE YOU--MY BABY! YOU PROMISED!

WHAT ABOUT MY BABY?!

ALL IN GOOD TIME, MY DEAR...

MADAME DRAGONFLY.

ABRAHAM. TO WHAT DO I OWE THE PLEASURE?

JUST TRYING TO GET THE PLOWING DONE.

YES, BETTER TO GET IT DONE SOON. THERE'S A STORM COMING.

STORM? NOT A CLOUD IN SIGHT.

YES...I MUST BE MISTAKEN. SO WHAT DO YOU NEED, ABRAHAM?

I DON'T *NEED* ANYTHING, DRAGONFLY. JUST SAW YOU SITTING OUT HERE AND THOUGHT I'D SAY HELLO.

OH PLEASE, ABRAHAM. YOU HAVEN'T BOTHERED TO COME OUT HERE IN *MONTHS*.

BUT I HEAR THE *COLONEL* HAS BEEN.

HA! IS THAT WHAT THIS IS ABOUT? YOU'RE *JEALOUS*, ABRAHAM?

THAT WOMAN...THE SHERIFF'S WIFE. ISN'T SHE KEEPING YOU COMPANY THESE DAYS?

HIS *EX*-WIFE.

RIGHT. WELL, AT ANY RATE, I ASSURE YOU THE GOOD COLONEL WEIRD AND I... WELL, WE HAVE CERTAIN THINGS IN COMMON.

LIKE?

LIKE, YOU ALL LOOK AT BOTH OF US AS IF WE ARE *DAMAGED GOODS.* PARIAHS.

ACTUALLY, THE COLONEL SHOWED UP FOR DINNER THE OTHER NIGHT. HE WAS QUITE... HELPFUL.

AND, DRAGONFLY, DON'T TRY TO ACT AS IF I SHOULD FEEL SORRY FOR YOU. IF YOU'RE A PARIAH, IT'S BECAUSE YOU SET YOURSELF UP TO BE ONE.

YOU *CHOSE* TO LIVE OUT HERE ALONE. YOU CHOSE NOT TO VISIT THE HOUSE ANYMORE.

THE CABIN NEEDS ME, ABRAHAM. MORE AND *MORE...* IT NEEDS ME.

MAYBE I SHOULD HAVE SAID THIS A LONG TIME AGO, DRAGONFLY...

...BUT *SO DO WE.*

HEY, BIG GUY. LONG TIME NO SEE.

GAIL. DONE WITH ***SCHOOL*** ALREADY? WHAT TIME IS IT?

ALMOST FOUR.

HUH. COMPLETELY LOST TRACK OF TIME.

NOT ME. I WAS COUNTING DOWN THE MINUTES UNTIL I COULD GET ***OUT*** OF THAT PLACE.

YOU OKAY, BARBIE? YOU SEEM--

I'M...I THINK I'M GOOD, GAIL. REALLY GOOD. JUST SOMETHING IN THE AIR TODAY. FELT A BIT SPACY ALL DAY.

YEAH. ME TOO. WEIRD AIR PRESSURE OR SOMETHING.

YEAH.

SOMETHING ***ELSE*** IS GOING ON WITH YOU. YOU'VE BEEN ACTING WEIRD FOR THE LAST FEW WEEKS. I KNOW SOMETHING'S UP.

...CAN YOU KEEP A SECRET, GAIL?

BARBIE. IT'S ***ME.***

WELL, WE'VE BEEN HERE *SO LONG.*

I--I'M JUST TIRED OF BEING *ALONE,* GAIL. I'M TIRED OF HOLDING BACK THE WAY I *REALLY AM.* THE WAY I *REALLY FEEL.*

I JUST... WELL, I'VE DEVELOPED FEELINGS FOR SOMEONE.

YOU HAVE?

YES.

OH THANK GOD... ME *TOO,* BARBIE. I'VE WANTED TO SAY SOMETHING FOR SO LONG BUT I WASN'T SURE IF...

WHAT DO YOU--? *OH.* OH, GAIL. NO. I DIDN'T MEAN...

OH... I'M *SORRY,* GAIL.

YOU *KNOW* I LOVE YOU, BUT...YOU'RE A *CHILD.*

THAT'S JUST IT. *I'M NOT.*

I KNOW, BUT...IT'S *NOT* JUST THAT. EVEN IF YOU WERE--

DON'T. *DON'T* PATRONIZE ME.

GAIL, WAIT!

"STILL THERE, BRAVE READER? OR HAS HEART-BREAK TAKEN HOLD OF YOU, TOO?"

STILL LURKING JUST OFF THE *PAGE*, WAITING FOR ANOTHER SCARE?

WELL, YOU'VE COME TO THE RIGHT PLACE, FOR FEAR IS PLENTIFUL HERE. *HORROR* IS THE CURRENCY IN WHICH I DEAL...

"WHEN WE LAST MET, I TOLD YOU A TALE OF LONG AGO. ***THIS*** PARABLE OF PAIN IS MUCH FRESHER...NEARLY ONE HUNDRED YEARS AFTER THE OLD WITCH PROMISED YOUR FAITHFUL HOST HER HEART'S DESIRE, AND INSTEAD LEFT HER WITH A ***BURDEN*** IN THE SHAPE OF A CABIN."

KRA-KOOM

"STILL SHE PINED FOR HER LOST CHILD TO RETURN. BUT IT WAS NOT HER BABY WHO CAME THAT NIGHT. NO, IT WAS SOMETHING ***FAR MORE DANGEROUS.***"

HERE IT IS! I TOLD YOU THIS WAS WHERE THE ***WITCH*** LIVED, BERNIE!

QUIET, LENNY! SHE'LL HEAR US COMING!

SO WHAT?! IT'S TOO LATE. THIS OLD BITCH HAS BEEN HAUNTING THESE WOODS FOR AS LONG AS ANY CAN REMEMBER.

MY DADDY SAID HE EVEN HEARD STORIES OF HER WAY BACK WHEN ***HE*** WAS A KID.

WHO ***DARES*** APPROACH ***MY CABIN*** WITHOUT AN INVITA-TION?!

WE--WE DON'T WANT NO TROUBLE. WE WANT THE KIDS--THE ***MISSING KIDS.*** WE KNOW YOU HAVE 'EM!

THERE ARE CHILDREN MISSING? I'M SORRY, I DIDN'T REALIZE--PERHAPS I CAN HELP?

STAY BACK, YOU LYING WHORE! YOU GOT THEM ***IN THERE,*** DON'T YOU?!

THERE ARE ***MANY THINGS*** HIDING IN THIS OLD CABIN, BUT I ASSURE YOU, CHILDREN ARE ***NOT*** AMONG THEM.

NOW, I WARN YOU... ***DO NOT THREATEN ME AGAIN.***

COME ON, LEN, MAYBE WE SHOULD GO. THIS AIN'T RIGHT.

NO! WE CAME THIS FAR! WE'RE GONNA FIND THEM KIDS!
NO! YOU CANNOT ENTER!
HEY! BERNIE! BERNIE, GET IN HERE!
CREEAAAAK
CREEAAAAK
ARRRRGGHH!!
L-LEN?! LEN!!
IT IS TOO LATE FOR YOUR FRIEND.

LET HIM GO! LET HIM GO!

I CANNOT! THE CABIN HAS HIM NOW! DO NOT--

GET BACK!

BLAM

NO!

FWOOSH!

ARRRGH!!

SPLOOSH

FWWSHH

I--I AM SORRY. I...DIDN'T MEAN TO...

OH!

MY--
MY MAGIC--
WHAT HAVE I
DONE?!

"THE MISSING CHILDREN WERE FOUND UNHARMED DAYS LATER... BUT WHAT SHE FOUND THAT NIGHT WAS SOMETHING ELSE ENTIRELY.

"SHE HAD BEEN ALONE IN THAT OLD CABIN FOR A LONG TIME. BUT THAT NIGHT FATE, AND A MISCAST SPELL, DEALT A NEW HAND."

I...I...

...I...AM... DIFFERENT... I AM...

"SHE WOULD BE ALONE NO MORE."

...YOU ARE BEAUTIFUL.

HEY, BEAUTIFUL.

ABE! I THOUGHT YOU WERE WORKING ALL DAY?

EXIT

I WAS, BUT THEN I WAS SITTING THERE ON THAT TRACTOR AND STARTED ***DAYDREAMING*** ABOUT YOUR CHEESEBURGER. COULDN'T RESIST TAKING A LUNCH BREAK. PLUS THE WEATHER IS STARTING TO TURN.

HUH! SO YOU ONLY WANT ME FOR MY BURGERS AND FRIES, EH?

WELL...I'D BE LYING IF I SAID I DIDN'T WANT TO SEE YOU ***TOO***, DARLIN'.

I HAD A REAL NICE TIME AT DINNER THE OTHER NIGHT.

YEAH, THAT WAS ALL RIGHT, WASN'T IT?

SURE WAS.

YOU KNOW, ABE, I BEEN ***THINKING***...YOU SAID YOU'D BE DONE IN THE FIELDS IN ANOTHER WEEK OR TWO, AND I GOT A VACATION WEEK SAVED UP...WHAT DO YOU THINK ABOUT GETTING OUT OF TOWN?

I...UH...

WELL. THAT IS ***NOT*** THE REACTION I EXPECTED.

NO, IT'S JUST THAT--WELL, IT'S HARD FOR ME TO LEAVE TOWN, TAMMY.

WITH GAIL AND ALL.

CAN'T ONE OF YOUR SONS WATCH HER? OR HER *MOTHER?*

IT'S--IT'S COMPLICATED, TAMMY. I JUST--IT'S NOT A GOOD TIME RIGHT NOW.

NEVER MIND. I JUST THOUGHT IT WOULD BE NICE TO GET AWAY.

TAMMY, WAIT--

DON'T WORRY ABOUT IT. I'LL GO GET YOUR BURGER.

HEARTBREAK ABOUNDS, IT WOULD SEEM.

WHAT DO I KNOW OF SUCH THINGS? YOU WOULD BE SURPRISED. THE *CABIN OF HORRORS* IS A TERRIBLE PLACE, FILLED WITH DREAD. BUT IF YOU'D *INDULGE* ME, MY DARK COMPANION, I WILL SHOW THAT--FOR A TIME--IT ALSO KNEW ANOTHER EMOTION.

"FOR A TIME... THE CABIN KNEW *LOVE* AS WELL."

I...NEVER KNEW...I COULD *FEEL*...SO MUCH.

YES, MY LOVE. NOR *I*. THESE PAST MONTHS HAVE BEEN THE MOST UNEXPECTED AND WONDERFUL OF MY LONG LIFE. I'D GIVEN UP HOPE THAT I'D EVER FIND SOMEONE TO SHARE MY BURDEN.

YOUR MAGIC... MADE ME, DRAGONFLY. WHAT...SHOULD HAVE BEEN A *CURSE*...HAS BEEN A BLESSING.

YES, BUT I FEAR THAT SOON I SHALL HAVE TO LEAVE.

LEAVE? BUT...WHERE WILL YOU...GO... MY LOVE?

LOOK. EVEN NOW A CATACLYSM STIRS. A *NIGHTMARE* FAR BEYOND OUR LITTLE CABIN IS COMING.

I HAVE SEEN IT. AND I WILL JOIN THE FIGHT. MY MAGIC USED NOT FOR DARKNESS, BUT FOR *LIGHT*.

HURRY BACK, MY LOVE...I CARE NOT TO LIVE... WITHOUT YOU.

"BUT THAT WOULD BE THE LAST TIME SHE SAW HER MONSTER.

"FOR THE ***BATTLE*** SHE FORESAW RAGED ACROSS THE COSMOS AND ACROSS THE PLANET.

"AND, THOUGH SHE WAS NO HERO, SHE FOUGHT VALIANTLY JUST THE SAME.

"IN SPIRAL CITY WE MADE OUR ***LAST STAND.*** THE FATE OF MANKIND RESTED ON US...AND WE DESTROYED THE EVIL KNOWN AS ANTI-GOD...OR SO WE THOUGHT.

"THERE WAS A FLASH OF LIGHT...

"...AND THEN... WE WERE ***SOME-WHERE ELSE.***

"BUT HER BURDEN WOULD NOT BE CAST ASIDE SO EASILY. THE ***OLD CABIN*** CAME WITH HER.

"SHE RAN TO IT, HOPING TO FIND HER MONSTER. BUT HE HAD ***NOT*** TRAVELED TO THIS STRANGE PLACE WITH THEM. IT SEEMS ONCE AGAIN SHE WAS ALONE WITH ONLY HER CABIN TO KEEP HER COMPANY."

BUT THIS SOMBER TALE DOES NOT END HERE, READER. NO, FOR WHAT IS ANY GOOD STORY WITHOUT A ***TWIST?***

"IT SEEMS A PART OF HER MONSTER HAD MADE THE JOURNEY WITH HER... HIS SEED HAD TAKEN ROOT. THE OLD WITCH WAS RIGHT; TIME ***WOULD*** BRING A CHILD BACK TO HER ARMS.

"AND WHAT HAPPENED TO THE ***CHILD?***

"SOME TALES ARE TOO DARK EVEN FOR ***ME*** TO RETELL.

"SOME STORIES SHOULD REMAIN ***A SECRET.***

"AND SOME SECRETS SHOULD REMAIN ***BURIED.***"

SRRZZZK

COLONEL WEIRD.

Dragonfly--this storm. Is it YOUR doing?

KRA-KOOM

NO, COLONEL. THIS IS NOT ME. I--I DON'T KNOW WHAT'S HAPPENING.

THERE!

What's happening, Dragonfly?!

I DON'T KNOW! HURRY, BEFORE THE OTHERS SEE!

KZLZT!

YOU!

I--I KNOW WHAT YOU DID!

I--I KNOW WHAT *THIS PLACE IS!*

SHHH...IT'S ALL RIGHT, DEAR. LET ME HELP. WHAT'S YOUR NAME?

LUCY-- LUCY WEBER. I'VE TRAVELED SO FAR! I KNOW WHAT YOU ***ARE!*** I KNOW WHAT YOU'VE ***DONE!***

SHHH...EASY NOW. IT'S GOING TO BE ALL RIGHT.

*FORGET.*

DRAGONFLY? WEIRD?! WHAT THE HELL IS GOING ON?!

WHO IS THAT?!

SHE SAYS HER NAME IS LUCY WEBER.

BLACK HAMMER'S DAUGHTER? SHE-- SHE WAS JUST A GIRL WHEN WE LEFT!

EASY, ABE. SHE SEEMS PRETTY SHOOK UP.

WH-WHAT'S GOING ON?!

WHERE AM I?

IT'S ALL RIGHT, LUCY... YOU ARE HOME.

R.I.P
JOSEPH
WEBER
BLACK
HAMMER

# BLACK HAMMER FALLS!

HERE YOU GO, PETE. GOOD TO SEE YOU BACK HERE. WE WERE WORRIED ABOUT YOU.

JUST GLAD YOU'RE *HERE*. WITHOUT THIS PLACE, DON'T KNOW WHAT WE'D DO.

GOD BLESS YOU, JOE. BEEN A ROUGH COUPLE OF WEEKS, BUT WHAT'S NEW. I LIVED THROUGH WORSE.

I BET YOU HAVE. YOU MAKE SURE TO STAY WARM OUT THERE. GETTING COLD.

NIGHT, JOE.

GOOD NIGHT, PETE. YOU TAKE CARE.

SURE IS A COLD NIGHT. I CAN'T WAIT TO GET HOME AND COZY UP WITH LORRAINE. I KNOW SHE HATES ME WORKING LATE NIGHTS AT THE SOUP KITCHEN LIKE THIS, BUT *SOMEONE HAS TO.*

OUTTA THE WAY!

:UNGH!:

SOMEONE DOWN THERE! THOSE WEIRD-LOOKING CATS MUST HAVE MUGGED HIM!

UNNNGH--

LOOK AT THAT CRAZY HAMMER! WHAT THE HECK IS GOING ON HERE?

M-MISTER? YOU OKAY?

THE LIGHT IS IN JEOPARDY... ***THE HAMMER*** MUST NOT FALL--

THE HAMMER MUST NOT FALL! THE ***LIGHT*** DEPENDS ON IT!

I--I DON'T UNDERSTAND...

SOMEONE ***MUST*** WIELD THE HAMMER...BUT ONLY THE WORTHY...ONLY THE PURE OF HEART. ARE YOU ***PURE?*** ARE YOU ***WORTHY?***

=HHH=

HE'S DEAD. BUT THAT HAMMER... LIKE IT'S ***CALLING*** TO ME...

KRAK

WHAT THE--?!

TH-THIS ISN'T SPIRAL CITY ANYMORE, IS IT?! WHERE *AM* I?!

THIS IS *NEW WORLD*, AND I AM STARLOK, LORD OF THE LIGHTRIDERS!

ARF!

*LIGHT-RIDERS?* WHAT KIND OF CRAZY JIVE YOU *TALKING*, MAN?!

BEHOLD, JOSEPH WEBER... BEHOLD THE SECRET HISTORY OF NEW WORLD!

"SINCE THE DAWN OF ALL THINGS, THE FORCES OF LIGHT HAVE STOOD AGAINST THE FORCES OF DARK... STRIKING A BALANCE IN THE COSMOS.

"AND I--***STARLOK***--HAVE STOOD AGAINST EVIL INCARNATE, MY DARK BROTHER, MY EVIL TWIN--THE COSMIC DESPOT ***ANTI-GOD!***

"BUT I DO NOT FIGHT THIS ETERNAL BATTLE ALONE. WITH ME ARE MY SOLDIERS, MY PROUD WARRIORS: ***THE LIGHTRIDERS!***"

***THE ESCAPER,*** MY SON AND ONCE A PRISONER OF ANTI-GOD'S TERROR TRENCHES. NO PRISON CAN HOLD HIM, NO POWER CAN OPPOSE HIM!

***WHIPTARA,*** THE WARRIOR PRIESTESS!

AND THE YOUNGEST LIGHT-RIDER, THE WORLD-JUMPING ***TIME-BOY*** AND HIS LOYAL PET, ***WARPIE*** THE CHRONO-PUP!

AND THERE WAS ONE OTHER. THE MAN YOU MET IN THAT ALLEYWAY ON EARTH--MY MOST POWERFUL AND LOYAL SOLDIER--***THE BLACK HAMMER!***

ANTI-GOD KNOWS HE CANNOT TAKE NEW WORLD, SO HE HAS TURNED HIS DARK GAZE ***ELSEWHERE.*** BLACK HAMMER TRACKED ANTI-GOD'S OPERATIVES TO SPIRAL SLUMS. BUT IT WAS A ***TRAP,*** AND BLACK HAMMER HAS FALLEN.

ARF!

BUT HIS POWER AND ESSENCE HAVE BEEN TRANSPORTED INTO ***YOU,*** JOE WEBER...NOW YOU MUST TAKE HIS PLACE AT MY SIDE. YOU MUST BECOME ***BLACK HAMMER!***

WHAT? ***ME?!*** BUT I'M JUST A SOCIAL WORKER FROM SPIRAL SLUMS!

YOU HAVE NO CHOICE. WITHOUT BLACK HAMMER, THE BALANCE BETWEEN GOOD AND EVIL WILL COLLAPSE. NEW WORLD--AND ALL THE COSMOS--WILL BE IN ***DANGER,*** EVEN YOUR EARTH.

FINE! I'LL BECOME THIS... THIS ***BLACK HAMMER,*** BUT I'M NOT STAYING HERE WITH YOU! I HAVE A WIFE AND RESPONSIBILITIES BACK ON EARTH. I'LL FIGHT THIS ANTI-GOD...BUT I'LL DO IT FROM HOME.

HOME? NEW WORLD IS YOUR HOME NOW!

***NO WAY.*** SPIRAL SLUMS IS MY HOME--

SHRACK!

--AND SPIRAL SLUMS NEEDS ME!

I'M *BACK!* I DID IT. I GUESS I'M...A SUPERHERO NOW?! THIS IS *CRAZY!* I HAVE TO GET BACK TO THE APARTMENT AND TELL LORRAINE WHAT'S HAPPENED!

I CAN'T EXPLAIN *HOW,* BUT SOMEHOW I *JUST KNOW* THAT IF I STRIKE THE HAMMER ON THE GROUND...

BOOM!

...IT WILL ALLOW ME TO CHANGE BACK TO MY NORMAL SELF.

LORRAINE! YOU ARE NEVER GOING TO BELIEVE WHAT JUST HAPPENED TO ME, BABY!

*JOE?!* WHERE-- WHERE HAVE YOU BEEN?! I'VE BEEN WORRIED *SICK!* I THOUGHT YOU WERE *DEAD!*

DEAD? NO, LORRAINE, I'M *FINE!* THE MOST AMAZING THING HAPPENED TONIGHT ON THE WAY HOME.

TONIGHT...?! JOE, YOU'VE BEEN GONE FOR NEARLY FOUR MONTHS!

FOUR *MONTHS?!* THAT'S IMPOSSIBLE!

MAYBE IT'S *NOT*...MAYBE TIME RUNS DIFFERENTLY ON NEW WORLD!

AND YOU'RE NOT THE ONLY ONE WHO HAS *NEWS,* JOE.

LORRAINE! YOU'RE--?

YES, JOE...

"...WE'RE GOING TO HAVE A BABY!"

I DON'T REMEMBER.

WHATTA YOU MEAN YOU DON'T REMEMBER?! YOU *MUST* KNOW HOW YOU GOT HERE!

NO, I...IT'S SO FOGGY...

TSK

I'LL BE CLEANING *MUD* OUT OF MY GEARS FOR WEEKS.

I REMEMBER THE *GLOBAL PLANET* APPROVING AN INVESTIGATIVE STORY INTO YOUR DISAPPEARANCE FOR THE TENTH ANNIVERSARY OF ***THE EVENT***...I REMEMBER LOOKING FOR ANY SIGN OF MY FATHER, OF ALL OF YOU.

BUT THE REST IS JUMBLED... ALREADY FADING. I DON'T--

HOW CAN YOU NOT REMEMBER?! IF YOU GOT *HERE*, MAYBE *WE* CAN *GET OUT* THE SAME WAY!

YES, LUCY, ANY INFORMATION YOU CAN PROVIDE MAY WELL BE AN INVALUABLE CLUE TO OUR ESCAPE.

ESCAPE? WHAT DO YOU MEAN?

I MEAN WE'VE BEEN STUCK IN THIS FUCKING MUD PIT FOR TEN YEARS AND *WE CAN'T LEAVE!*

LUCY, HONEY... YOU WERE JUST A LITTLE GIRL WHEN I SAW YOU LAST. I KNOW THIS IS STRANGE, BUT IF THERE'S *ANYTHING*, EVEN THE *SLIGHTEST* DETAIL, IT MAY BE A CLUE TO HELP ALL OF US.

PLEASE--I'M SO CONFUSED.

THIS IS *SUCH BULL-SHIT!*

YOU'RE NOT HELPING, GAIL!

OH, YOU'RE ONE TO TALK ABOUT *NOT HELPING!* YOU HAVEN'T BEEN TO THE HOUSE IN *MONTHS!*

WELL, YOU CERTAINLY KNOW HOW TO MAKE ME FEEL *WELCOME*, GAIL! IT'S A WONDER I WANT NOTHING TO DO WITH *ANY* OF YOU!

YOU CREEPY *WITCH!* I SHOULD HAVE RIPPED YOUR DAMNED WINGS OFF A LONG TIME AGO!

YOU'LL HAVE TO REACH UP HERE FIRST, *LITTLE GIRL.*

OH, JUST SHUT THE HELL *UP*, YOU DIVA!

GUYS, GUYS...

DON'T YOU HAVE TO RUN OFF TO CHURCH? I THINK FATHER QUINN MIGHT BE LOOKING FOR A NEW *ALTAR BOY.*

BITCH!

*ENOUGH!*

WAIT-- WHERE'S MY DAD?!

YOU THINK *YOU* CAN STOP ME?! I'LL TELL YOU WHAT, YOU AIN'T NO MATCH FOR *THE JACKHAMMER* AND HIS *DEMOLITION SQUAD!!*

BRAT-AT-A

DON'T NEED A WHOLE CREW TO GET THE JOB DONE. WHEN I WANT DEMOLITION, I JUST RELY ON MY *TRUSTY HAMMER.*

WHAT?

NICE JOB, HAMMER.

THANKS, GAIL. BARELY BROKE A SWEAT. BUT I'M GLAD WE WRAPPED THIS UP. IT'S MY LITTLE GIRL'S BIRTHDAY, AND I PROMISED I'D BE HOME FOR CAKE.

I CAN FINISH THESE ***BOZOS*** OFF, HAMMER. GET GOING!

YOU'RE A SWEETHEART, GAIL. I OWE YOU ONE.

*PHEW!* LORRAINE WOULD KILL ME IF I MISSED THE PARTY. AND I HATE TO DISAPPOINT LUCY. BETWEEN HELPING STARLOK AND THE LIGHT-RIDERS ON NEW WORLD AND ALL THE CRIME I'VE BEEN FIGHTING HERE IN SPIRAL CITY, I'VE BEEN AWAY ***TOO MUCH*** LATELY.

***DADDY!*** YOU MADE IT!

OF COURSE I DID, PEANUT. I WOULDN'T MISS THIS PARTY FOR THE WORLD!

IT'S A GOOD THING, TOO.

I CAN'T BELIEVE YOU'RE ALREADY TEN YEARS OLD!

HAPPY BIRTHDAY

I ***KNOW!*** MOMMY MADE A CAKE! IT'S STRAWBERRY! THAT'S MY FAVORITE!

HAPPY BIRTHDAY

ACTUALLY, MAYBE CHOCOLATE IS MY FAVORITE...OR LEMON?

YOU'RE MAKING ME HUNGRY.

*BLACK HAMMER! YOU ARE NEEDED ON NEW WORLD IMMEDIATELY!*

STARLOK?! I'M SORRY, BUT IT'S MY DAUGHTER'S BIRTHDAY. I CAN'T GET AWAY.

ANTI-GOD'S FORCES HAVE AMASSED. THE ESCAPER HAS ALREADY **FALLEN** AND WHIPTARA AND HER WHAMAZONS ARE BARELY HOLDING THEM BACK FROM NEW WORLD CENTER!

YOU HAVE NO CHOICE! YOU **MUST** COME AT **ONCE!**

LORRAINE, I--

IT'S YOUR CHOICE, JOE. **YOUR** CHOICE, NOT HIS.

I'M SORRY, STARLOK, BUT MY FAMILY NEEDS ME **MORE** RIGHT NOW.

YOU'LL JUST HAVE TO MAKE DO **WITHOUT** ME.

**BOOM**

ARE YOU **SURE,** DADDY? GRANDPA STARLOK SOUNDED LIKE HE WAS IN BIG TROUBLE.

I'M SURE, PEANUT. STARLOK GETS HIMSELF INTO SOME NEW FIX EVERY MONTH. MY LITTLE GIRL ONLY TURNS TEN **ONCE.**

I CAN'T *BELIEVE* IT. I CAN'T BELIEVE HE'S REALLY GONE.

ARE YOU SURE? I MEAN-- SUPERHEROES DIE ALL THE TIME. HOW CAN YOU BE *CERTAIN--?*

WE'RE SURE, HONEY. WE WERE ALL THERE WHEN YOUR DADDY DIED.

*TRUST ME.* I USED ALL MY MAGIC TO BE CERTAIN.

WE BURIED HIM TEN YEARS AGO. I'M SORRY...BUT HE'S GONE.

IN A WAY, WHEN HE TRIED TO LEAVE THE FARM, HE SAVED US *ALL.* IF HE HADN'T FLOWN PAST THE *PERIMETER,* IF WE HADN'T SEEN WHAT HAPPENED, WE MIGHT ALL HAVE...

OH.

THAT WAS JOE. ALWAYS THE FIRST INTO THE FRAY. *ALWAYS* THE HERO.

GAIL!

WHAT?!

...POUR ME SOME.

ME TOO.

:SIGH: YES, PLEASE.

HALLELUJAH!

TSK--WHY DO I BOTHER? YOU'RE ALL A BUNCH OF UNCIVILIZED ALCOHOLICS, YOU KNOW THAT?!

SO...YOU CAN'T LEAVE THE FARM AT ALL?

WE MAPPED A PERIMETER PRETTY QUICKLY AFTER YOUR FATHER'S ACCIDENT. TALKY WAS ABLE TO MATCH THE ENERGY READINGS FROM WHERE...WHERE HE DIED.

THE PERIMETER EXTENDS TO THE TREE LINE OF THE EAST WOODS AND TO THE SOUTH EDGE OF THE FARM. BUT THE NORTHERN AND WESTERN BORDERS ARE FARTHER AWAY. WE CAN FREELY TRAVEL THE TOWN AND THE BACK ROADS TO THE WEST ABOUT ANOTHER TEN MILES.

THE TOWN?! THERE ARE OTHER ***PEOPLE?*** SURELY THEY KNOW WHERE THIS IS?

THE TOWN IS CALLED ***ROCKWOOD.*** THE PEOPLE ARE--WELL, THEY'RE NORMAL.

FOR THE FIRST FEW MONTHS WE ALL THOUGHT IT WAS SOME ELABORATE TRAP. WE THOUGHT MAYBE THEY WERE AGENTS OF ***ANTI-GOD,*** BUT...THEY'RE JUST NORMAL, BORING-ASS HICKS.

WE'VE DONE OUR BEST TO BLEND IN. IT'S BEEN EASY ENOUGH FOR THE MOST PART.

WHY NOT JUST TELL THEM WHO YOU ARE?

FAR AS WE CAN TELL, THESE PEOPLE HAVE NEVER HEARD OF ANY OF US...OR ***ANY*** SUPERHEROES, FOR THAT MATTER.

WHAT ABOUT THE INTERNET? DID YOU GUYS SEARCH FOR THIS PLACE, ROCKWOOD?

WHAT'S THE INTERNET?

ARE YOU JOKING, TALKY? OH BOY...THE WORLD HAS CHANGED A BIT SINCE THE EVENT, GUYS.

YOU DON'T KNOW HOW RELIEVED I AM JUST TO HEAR THE WORLD'S STILL ***THERE!*** AFTER WE BEAT ANTI-GOD IN SPIRAL...WELL, THERE WAS A FLASH OF WHITE ***LIGHT,*** THEN WE WERE HERE.

I WAS SO WORRIED IT WAS THE END OF ***EVERYTHING.*** I ADMIT, ONE OF MY THEORIES WAS THAT THIS WAS--SOUNDS STUPID TO SAY IT NOW--BUT THAT THIS WAS ***HEAVEN.*** THAT WE'D ALL ***DIED.***

YOU REALLY THINK THIS FUCKING DUMP IS HEAVEN, ABE? MORE LIKE ***HELL.***

LET'S NOT BE OVERLY HARSH...MAYBE PURGATORY.

NO. THE WORLD IS STILL THERE. ***THAT*** MUCH I AM SURE OF.

YOU ARE LIVING PROOF OF THAT, LUCY.

I--I WANT TO SEE WHERE YOU BURIED HIM...

"I WANT TO SEE MY DAD."

DADDY, PLEASE! DON'T GO!

I EXPLAINED THIS ALREADY, PEANUT... I HAVE NO ***CHOICE!*** NEW WORLD HAS BEEN DESTROYED. ANTI-GOD ***IS HERE!*** SPIRAL CITY IS FALLING. ***EVERY-THING*** IS FALLING.

I HAVE TO ***STOP*** HIM, LUCY. I HAVE TO TRY. IF I DON'T-- YOU'LL NEVER BE SAFE. ***NO ONE*** WILL.

I KNOW, DADDY. I'M JUST SCARED. I DON'T WANT YOU TO ***DIE.***

I WON'T DIE, PEANUT.

YOU PROMISE?

I PROMISE.

WITH ALL YOUR HEART?

WITH *ALL* MY HEART.

ABE SLAM AND COLONEL WEIRD ARE ASSEMBLING ALL THE HEROES WHO ARE LEFT. WE'RE GOING TO MAKE A STAND.

NOW, YOU REMEMBER WHAT ***YOU*** PROMISED? YOU'RE GOING TO STAY INSIDE WITH MOMMY, RIGHT? NO MATTER ***WHAT HAPPENS?***

YES. I REMEMBER.

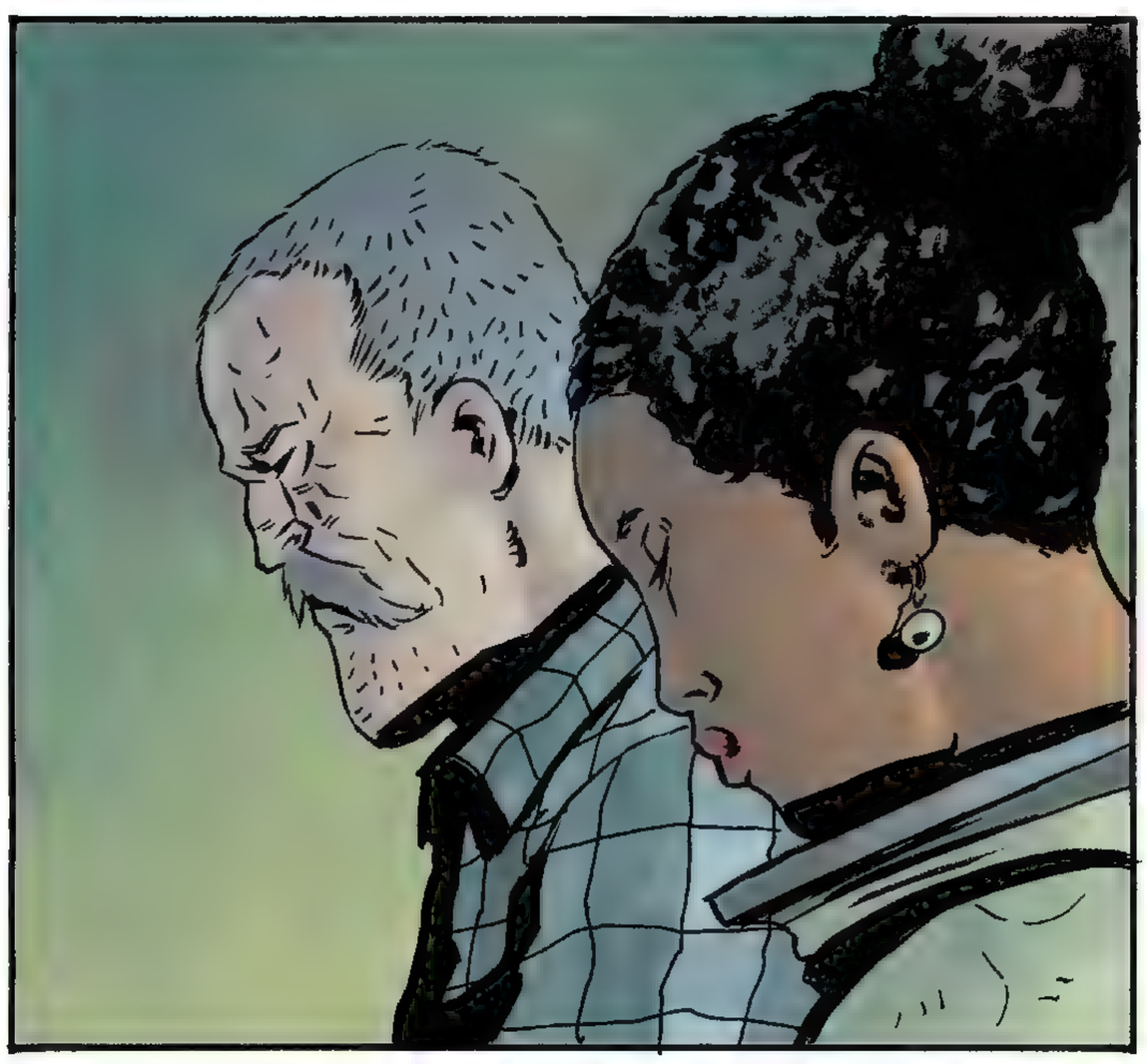
GOOD GIRL.

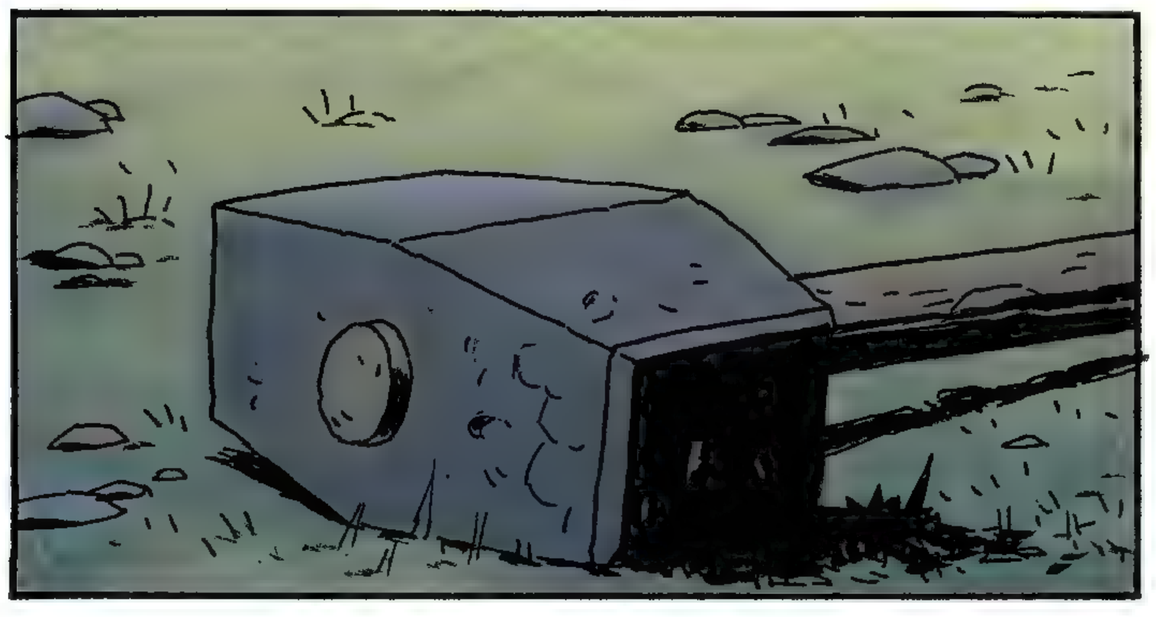
GOOD LUCK, DADDY! I LOVE YOU!

I LOVE YOU TOO, LUCY. WITH ***ALL*** MY HEART.

NOT MUCH FARTHER. WE'RE ALMOST THERE.

WE'RE ALMOST THERE! KEEP FIGHTING!





HA HA! The last of the LIGHT-RIDERS! I'll tear you and your friends apart just like I did STARLOK and his fools on New World!

NO, ANTI-GOD... NO MORE DEATH.

NO MORE!!

KA-THOOOM!

NOOOOOOOO!!

DADDY?!

DADDY...

HE DIED LIKE HE LIVED, LUCY. BRAVEST SON OF A BITCH I EVER MET.

WH-WHERE *ARE* WE? WHAT HAPPENED?

I DON'T KNOW, GOLDEN GAIL. WE WERE FIGHTING ANTI-GOD AND THEN THERE WAS A *LIGHT* AND--

WE GOTTA GET BACK TO SPIRAL CITY! WE HAVE TO MAKE SURE ANTI-GOD IS REALLY *DEAD!*

BLACK HAMMER, *WAIT!* I AM SENSING A STRANGE ENERGY SOURCE AROUND THE PERIMETER OF THIS FARM. PERHAPS SOME SORT OF FORCE FIELD. IT MAY BE A *TRAP* OF SOME SORT!

IT'S GOING TO TAKE MORE THAN SOME FORCE FIELD TO STOP ME.

JOE, MAYBE WE SHOULD BE CAREFUL-- JUST IN CASE.

MY *LITTLE GIRL* IS BACK THERE, ABRAHAM! I'M *NOT* GOING TO *LIE DOWN!*

WHO'S *WITH* ME?!

*DON'T!*

NO--NO, PLEASE!!

ARRRGGH!!

THUD

HE PROMISED. PROMISED HE WOULDN'T DIE.

HE WANTED TO GET HOME TO YOU. THAT'S ALL THAT MATTERED TO HIM. HE DIED TRYING TO FIND YOU.

AND NOW HERE I AM...

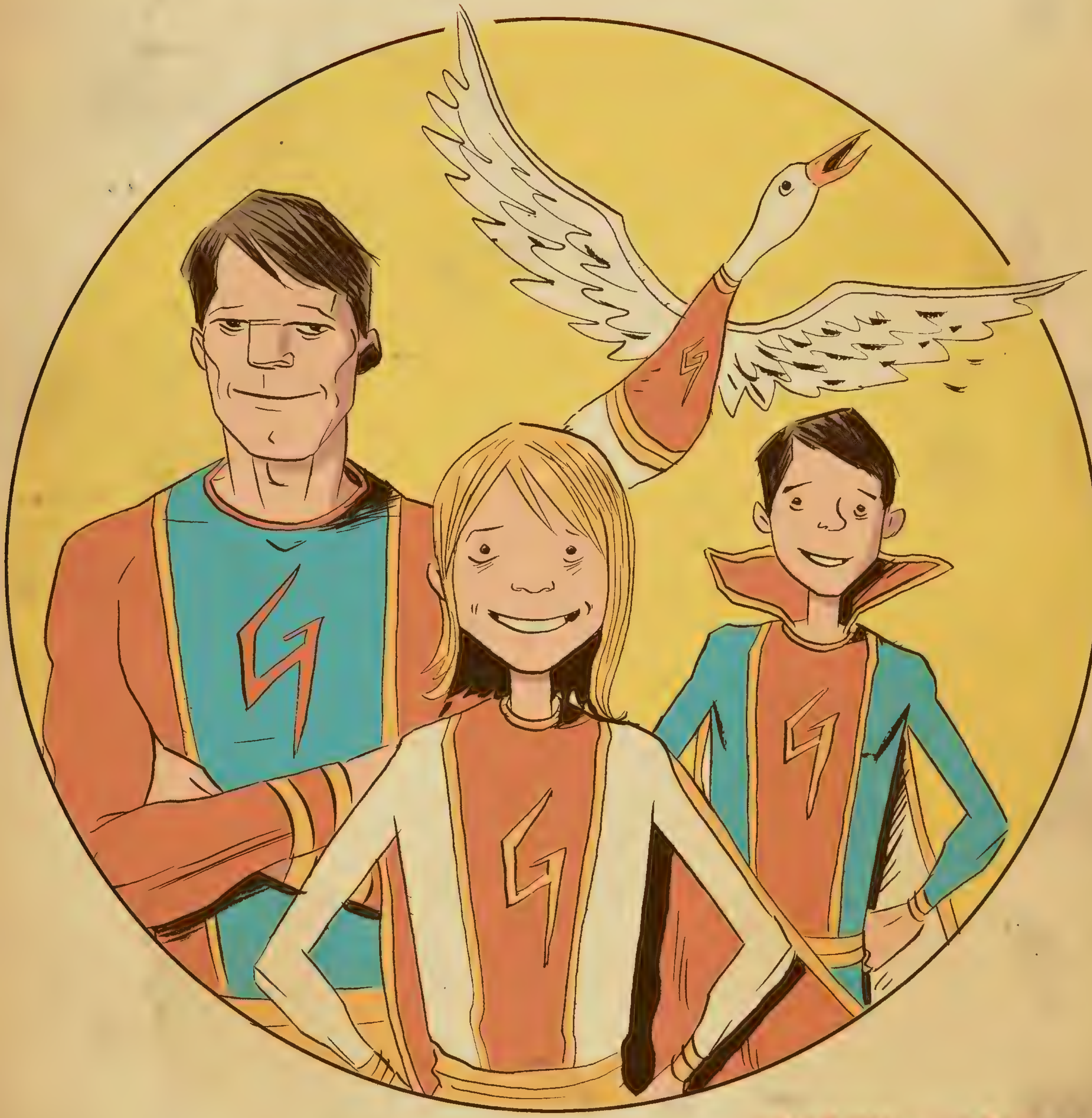
...LOST WITH THE REST OF YOU.

DARK HORSE PUBLICATIONS®

NO.8

# Black Hammer

COMICS



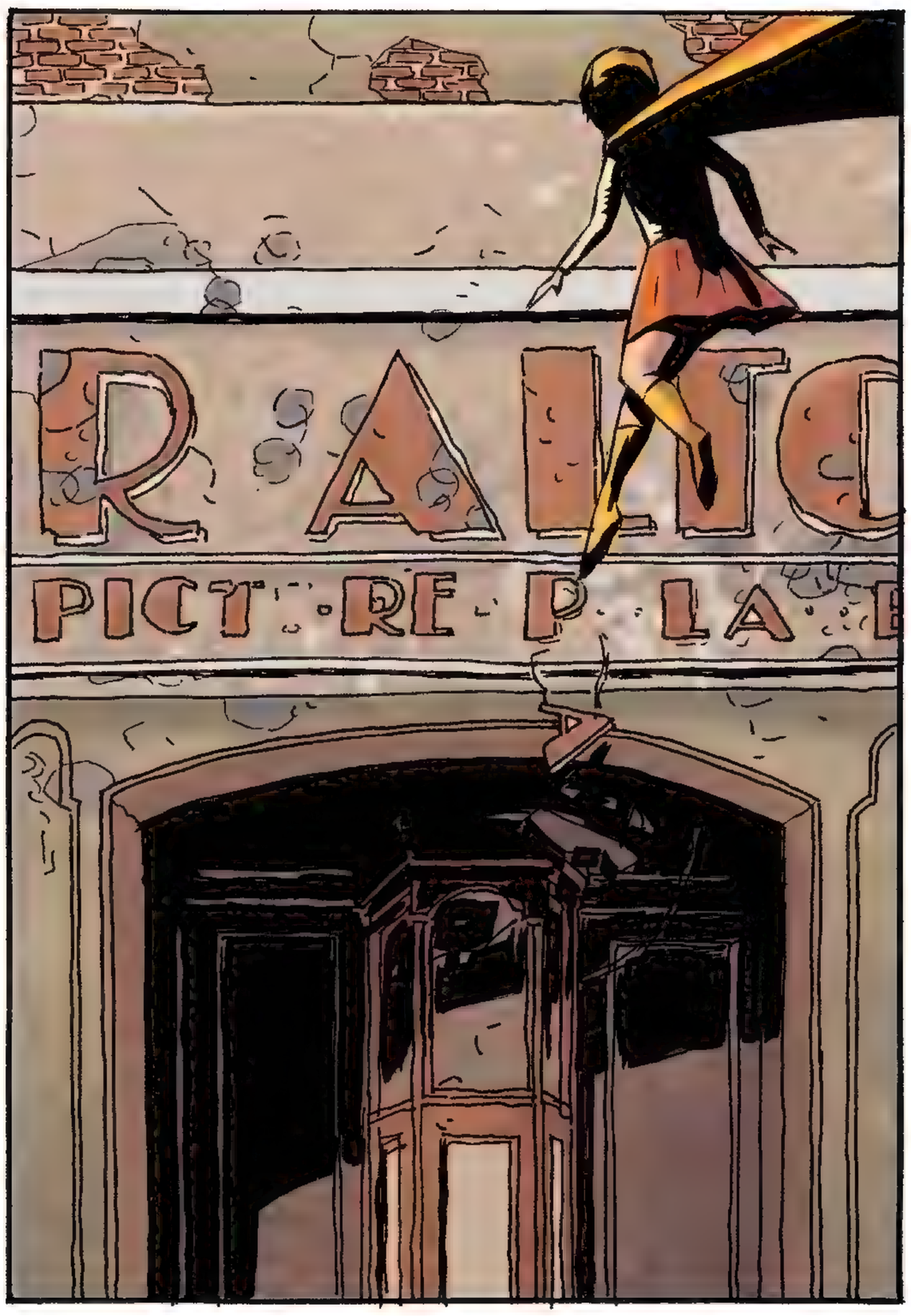
INTRODUCING

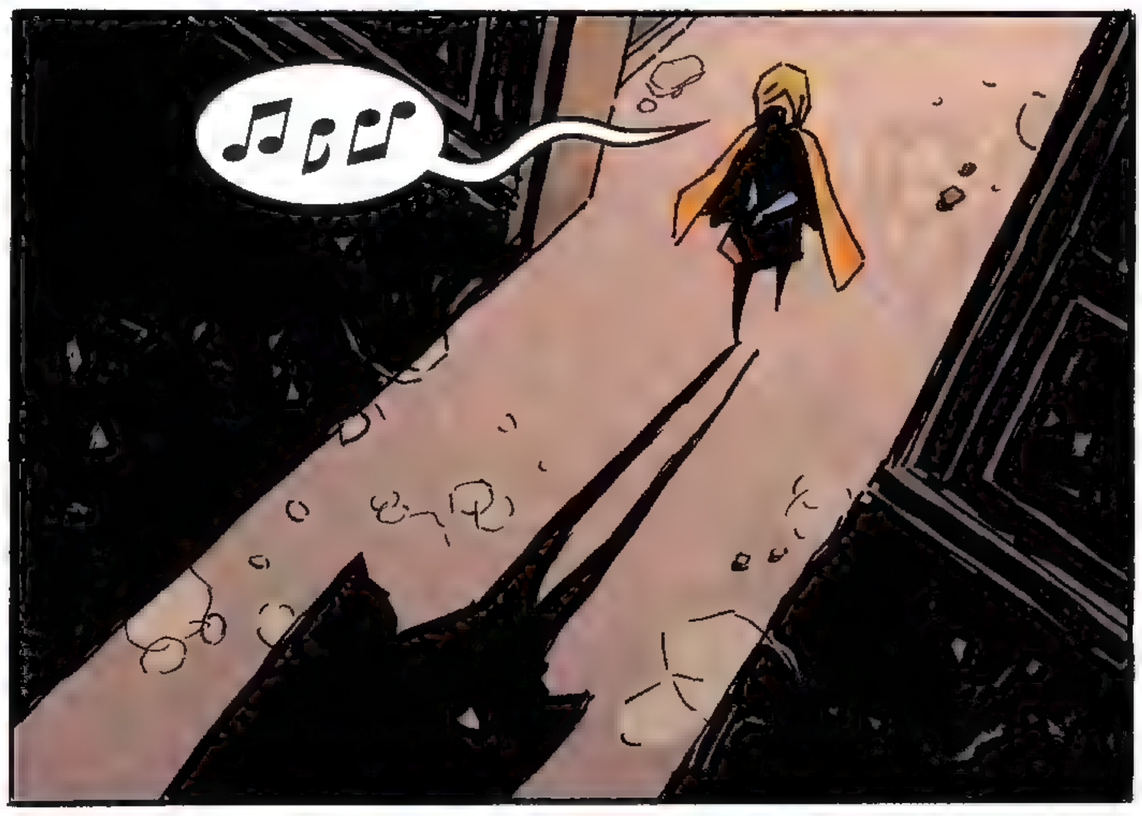
## THE GOLDEN FAMILY!

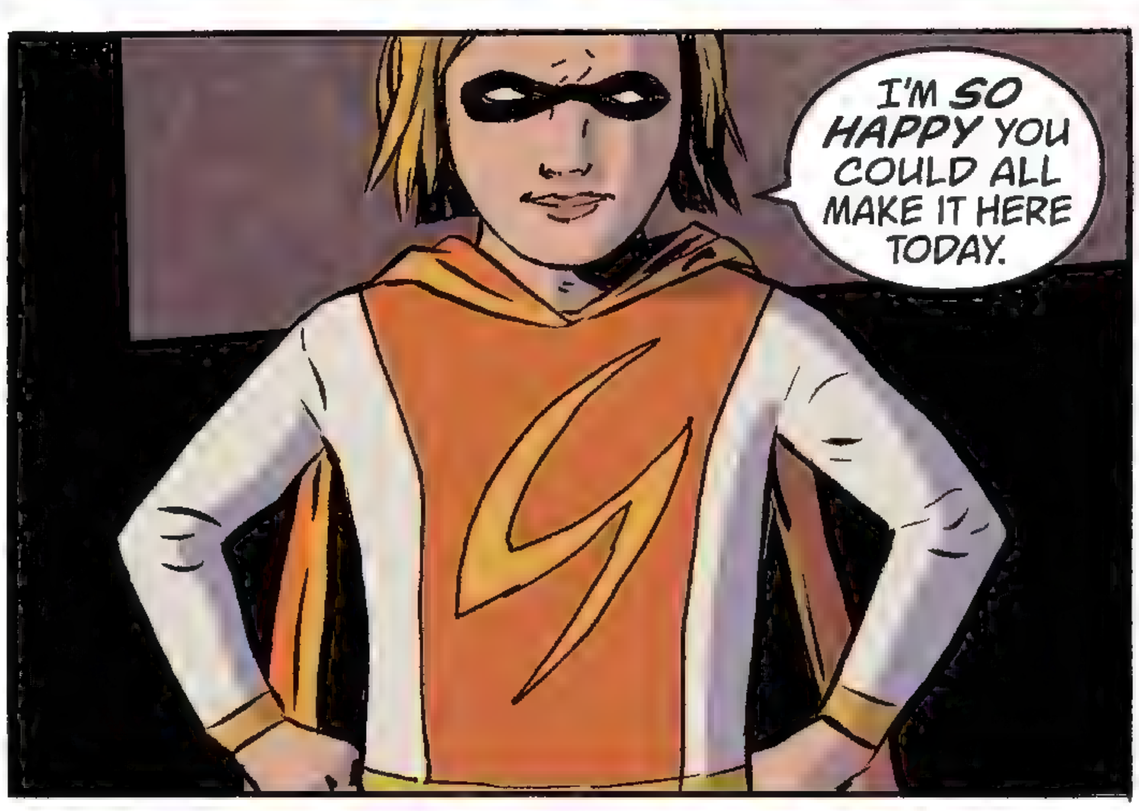
SPIRAL CITY.

SIZZLE

SIZZLE





...THE GOLDEN FAMILY!

THE OLD WIZARD WOULD BE *PROUD* TO SEE YOU ALL HERE. I KNOW THAT I AM.

UH...GAIL, ARE YOU FEELING OKAY?

QUACK!

YES...I'VE NEVER FELT BETTER, ACTUALLY, GOLDEN GWEN. WHY DO YOU ASK?

WELL, YOU SEEM... *HAPPY,* GAIL. FORGIVE ME, BUT I CAN'T REMEMBER EVER SEEING YOU LIKE THIS.

YEAH, WHAT GIVES?

WELL, CAPTAIN GOLDEN, GOLDEN GARY... I'M GLAD YOU ASKED.

I WAS ONLY A GIRL WHEN THE WIZARD BESTOWED THESE POWERS UPON ME IN ***THIS VERY THEATER.*** THAT WAS ALMOST ***FIFTY YEARS AGO.*** IN THAT TIME I'VE GIVEN A FRACTION OF THE POWERS TO EACH OF YOU.

I CREATED THE ***GOLDEN FAMILY*** TO AID ME IN MY BATTLE FOR JUSTICE.

WELL, I'VE GOT A CONFESSION TO MAKE. I DIDN'T GIVE YOU ALL YOUR POWERS ***JUST*** TO SHARE IN MY ADVENTURES.

YOU DIDN'T?

NO, CAP, I DIDN'T. I GAVE YOU YOUR POWERS SO THAT YOU COULD ONE DAY ***REPLACE ME.***

***REPLACE*** YOU? WH-WHAT ARE YOU SAYING, GAIL?

I'M SAYING... ***ZAFRAM!***

BOOOM!

I'VE BEEN DOING THIS FOR FAR TOO LONG. I'M TIRED, THE WORLD'S GONE TO HELL, AND I'M SICK OF THIS SHIT.

SO IT'S ***YOUR*** TURN, GANG.

I'M RETIRING.

RETIRING?!

B-BUT WHAT IF WE ***NEED*** YOU? WHAT IF SOME POWERFUL NEW VILLAIN ATTACKS AND WE CAN'T HANDLE IT?!

I DON'T CARE WHAT VILLAIN DOES WHAT TO WHOM! YOU'RE ALL BIG BOYS AND GIRLS. ***DEAL WITH IT.***

QUACK!

BUT WHAT ARE YOU GOING TO ***DO?***

I'M GONNA ***LIVE A REAL LIFE.***

The UGLY DUCKLING

THE HECK?!

WHAT ARE YOU DOING IN HERE?!

HUH...? TIME IS IT?

Y-YOU CAN'T JUST COME INTO MY PUB WHEN THE PLACE IS CLOSED!

IT SEEMS I CAN.

I--I *KNOW* YOU. YOU'RE THE SLAMKOWSKI GIRL! I'VE HEARD ABOUT YOU, MISSY!

OH, YEAH? WHAT'D YOU HEAR?

I HEARD YOU'RE A BRAT AND...A *BAD SEED!*

I'M CALLING YOUR GRANDPA! WHAT I HEAR, THAT ***MOTHER*** OF YOURS IS NEVER AROUND ANYWAY. JUST GOES TO SHOW, THIS KIND OF BEHAVIOR STARTS IN THE HOME! BAD FAMILY VALUES!

OHHH. I'M SHAKING.

YOU KEEP TALKING TOUGH, LITTLE LADY! WE'LL SEE WHAT YOUR GRANDFATHER HAS TO SAY ABOUT THIS!

HEY!

BAR

UGLY DUCKLING

RUBENS

BURGER

ROCKWOOD PUBLIC LIBRARY

I don't know where I am or how I got here.

ROCKWOOD PUBLIC LIBRARY

The last thing I remember is looking for my father. Holding on to some hope that he was still alive. I remember searching the whole world for him to no avail.

And then, suddenly, I was here. And he wasn't. He's dead. He's gone. Yet I'm still stuck in this place with no idea how to leave.

The others—Abe, Gail, Barbalien—they've checked out. Given up. Hell, I think Abe actually *likes* it here. *They* stopped asking questions, but *I* can't. It's not in my nature. I *have* to question things.

I *have* to get answers.

OH! WELL, HELLO, DIDN'T REALIZE YOU WERE OUT HERE.

HI, SORRY, I WASN'T SURE WHAT TIME YOU OPENED.

JUST OPENING NOW ACTUALLY. EARLY BIRD CATCHES THE WORM. HAVEN'T SEEN YOU AROUND. NEW TO TOWN?

YES. ACTUALLY, I'M STAYING UP AT BLACK HAMMER FARM. ABE AND THE OTHERS...WELL, THEY'RE FRIENDS OF THE FAMILY.

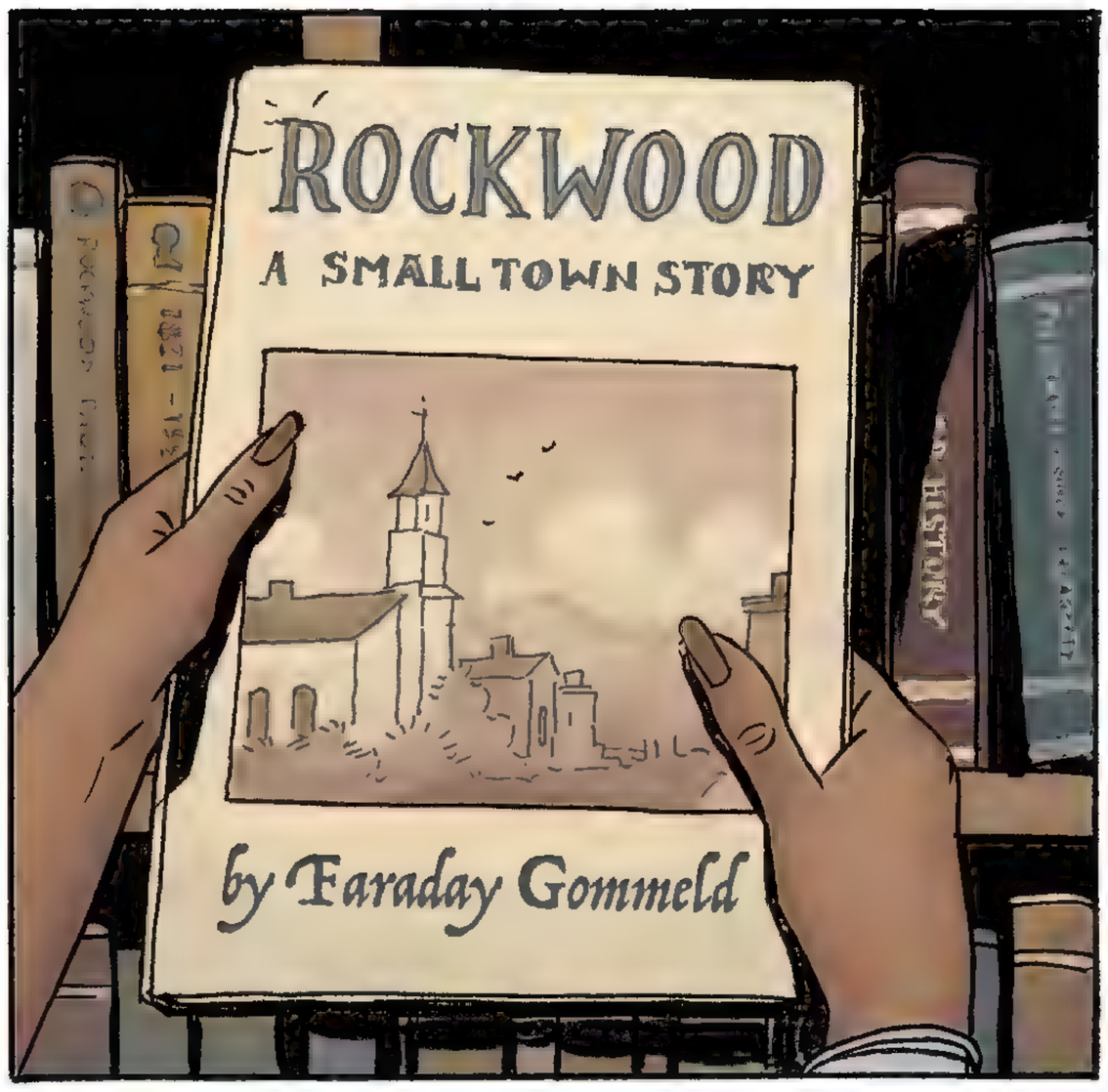
AH, ABE! WHAT A NICE MAN. THAT GRANDDAUGHTER OF HIS ON THE OTHER HAND... WELL, SHE'S A REAL HAND-FUL.

YOU DON'T KNOW THE HALF OF IT.

ACTUALLY, WHILE I'M VISITING, I THOUGHT IT WOULD BE NICE TO LEARN A BIT ABOUT THE ***TOWN'S HISTORY.***

OH, WE HAVE A GREAT SECTION ON LOCAL HISTORY. ROW 15.

THANKS!


ROCKWOOD
A SMALL TOWN STORY
by Faraday Gommeld

THE FOUNDING FATHERS OF ROCKWOOD

THE HELL?

DID YOU SAY SOMETHING, DEAR?

THESE BOOKS...

...THEY'RE ALL *BLANK.*

HUH! MUST BE SOME KIND OF MISPRINT. ISN'T THAT STRANGE?

YEAH... STRANGE.

*Strange doesn't even begin to cover this place. It's downright bizarre. Like I'm trapped in a dream.*

ANNUAL CHURCH BAZAAR

HOW MUCH DID YOU SAY, DEAR?
TWO FOR FIFTY CENTS, MA'AM.

HUMPH! I REMEMBER WHEN FATHER DRAKE WAS STILL HERE, THE PRICES WERE MUCH MORE REASONABLE.
YES, WELL, FATHER DRAKE ISN'T HERE, ETHEL, AND THE CHURCH NEEDS NEW SHINGLES!

OLD SHINGLES ARE JUST FINE, YOU ASK ME.
I DIDN'T.

YOU'RE TERRIBLE.

AH, SHE CAN TAKE IT. SHE'S A TOUGH OLD BIRD. BESIDES, SOME OF THESE OLD-TIMERS ARE SO SET IN THEIR WAYS. SO OLD FASHIONED. IT'S GOOD TO SHAKE THE TREE A BIT. WAKE THEM UP.

SPEAKING OF WHICH, I WANTED TO THANK YOU AGAIN FOR HELPING OUT, MARK.

OF COURSE. IT'S NOTHING.

MAYBE, BUT GETTING TO KNOW YOU HAS BEEN REALLY GOOD FOR ME. WHEN I CAME TO THIS PARISH A MONTH AGO, I WAS OUTNUMBERED. THE NEW GUY...

...IT'S NICE TO HAVE SOME-ONE ELSE TO TALK TO. I'M GLAD YOU'RE HERE, MARK.

I--

I'M GLAD, TOO.

STOP BY THE RECTORY FOR A DRINK LATER?

UH, SURE. YEAH.

AFTER YOU'VE SOLD ALL THOSE COOKIES. ROOF NEEDS NEW SHINGLES, YOU KNOW.

I HEAR THE OLD ONES ARE JUST FINE.

DON'T *YOU* START ON ME NOW.

ZAFRAM.

ZAFRAM!

ZAFRAM!!

TAP TAP

ANYONE HOME?

FRANKENLOCK

GOLDEN GAIL?!

SHERLOCK FRANKENSTEIN, MY OLDEST ENEMY. SO... YOU GONNA LET ME IN OR DO I HAVE TO BREAK THE GLASS?

NO, NO. HOLD ON ONE MOMENT, I CAN--

BLEEP!

GAIL, PLEASE! I'VE DONE NOTHING WRONG! I'VE ***GONE STRAIGHT.*** J-JUST LOOK AROUND! FRANKENLOCK WORLD-WIDE HAS BECOME A GLOBAL LEADER IN MEDICAL RESEARCH AND THE DEVELOPMENT OF CLEAN RENEWABLE ENERGY.

I'VE BEEN USING MY BILLIONS TO HELP. REALLY, IT'S NOT JUST A FRONT. I'VE ***CHANGED!*** I'VE PUT MY LIFE OF CRIME ***BEHIND ME.***

RELAX, SHERLOCK. I KNOW ALL ABOUT WHAT YOU'VE BEEN DOING. AND I GOTTA SAY...I'M ***IMPRESSED.*** YOU CLEAN UP PRETTY GOOD FOR AN UNDEAD GHOUL.

AND YOU'RE NOT THE ONLY ONE WHO'S PUT THEIR PAST BEHIND THEM.

WHAT DO YOU MEAN?

I JUST CAME FROM A MEETING WITH THE GOLDEN FAMILY. THE KIDS ARE TAKING OVER.

ZAFRAM!

SMACK

I'M HANGING UP MY CAPE, SHERLOCK.

SO... WHAT ARE YOU DOING ***HERE,*** GAIL?

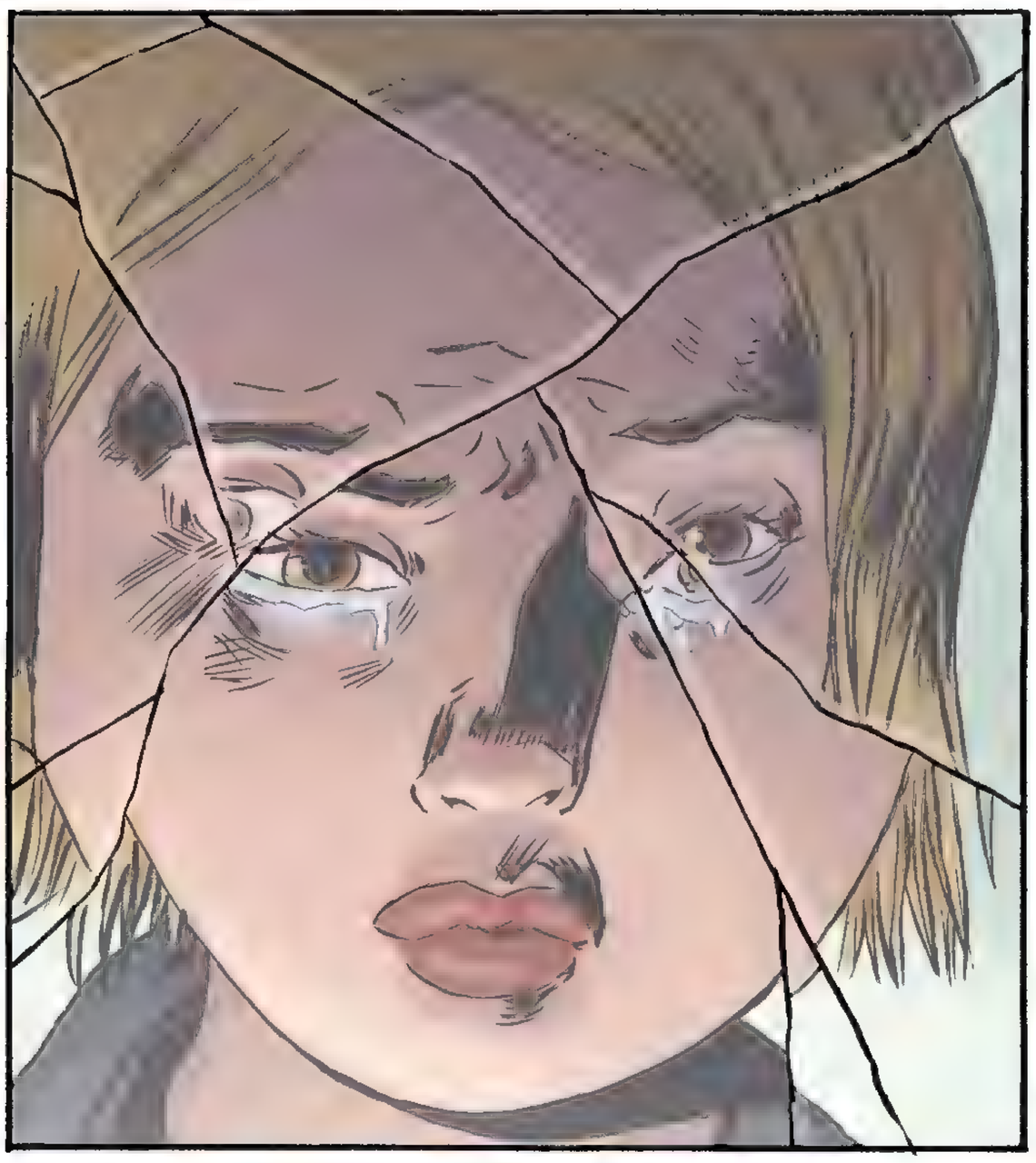
PLEASE. WE'VE BEEN DOING THE SAME OLD DANCE FOR DECADES, SHERLOCK. COPS AND ROBBERS. BAD GUYS, GOOD GAILS. I'M TIRED OF GAMES. I WANT ***SOMETHING REAL.***

I THINK IT'S TIME WE FINALLY ADMITTED ***THE TRUTH*** TO OURSELVES.

THE TRUTH?

BUT...I NEVER THOUGHT YOU COULD LOVE ME. YOU SAID IT YOURSELF, GAIL. I-I'M AN ***UNDEAD GHOUL.***

WHAT CAN I SAY, SHERLOCK? I'VE ALWAYS HAD A THING FOR ***WEIRD-LOOKING*** DUDES.



HELLO?

KZZZT

HELLO, TALKY. WHAT ARE YOU UP TO IN HERE?

LUCY! I WAS JUST STARTING WORK ON A NEW PROBE.

PROBE?

:SIGH: YES. I'VE BEEN BUILDING PROBES AND SENDING THEM OUT ACROSS THE PERIMETER, HOPING TO MAKE CONTACT WITH SOMETHING BEYOND.

SO FAR I'VE HAD NO LUCK.

LUCY?

LUCY? ARE YOU ALL RIGHT?

WHA--? OH. YEAH, SORRY. JUST HAD A WEIRD FLASH OF DÉJÀ VU OR SOMETHING.

WALKY...DID YOU TAKE ANY READINGS OF THE ANOMALY THAT BROUGHT ME HERE?

I WAS A BIT LATE TO THE SCENE, AND THE RAIN WAS INTERFERING WITH MY SENSORS A BIT, BUT I DID MANAGE TO TAKE A FEW READINGS, YES. WHY DO YOU ASK?

WHAT IF IT CAN GO BOTH WAYS? WHAT IF WHATEVER ***BROUGHT*** ME HERE HOLDS THE SECRET OF GETTING US--OR AT THE VERY LEAST, ONE OF YOUR PROBES--OFF THE FARM?

...

WHY DIDN'T I THINK OF THAT? LUCY, YOU'RE A *GENIUS.*

NO, JUST A REPORTER. I'M GOOD AT ASKING QUESTIONS.

LUCY, IF YOU'LL EXCUSE ME, I WANT TO GET TO WORK ON THIS RIGHT AWAY!

JUST--KEEP ME POSTED IF YOU FIND ANYTHING, OKAY?

*OF COURSE!*

AND LUCY--

YEAH?

THANK YOU. I'D--I'D ALMOST GIVEN UP.

KLZT

COLONEL! I WASN'T EXPECTING YOU.

I--I overheard your conversation, Talky-Walky. I am very sorry.

SORRY?

Sorry that I have to do this, old friend.

SHRACK!

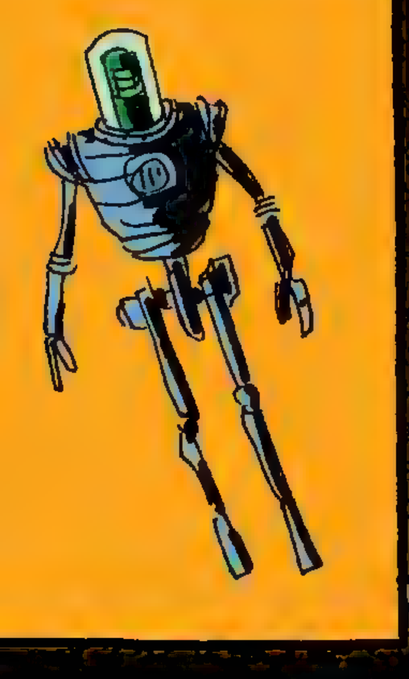
ZzZkT!

We can never leave, Talky...I can't allow it.

EVERYTHING HERE LOOKS QUIET, CONTROL! THIS WILL BE LIKE A WALK IN THE PARK...

LOOK INSIDE!!! WITNESS THE TERRIFIC SECRET ORIGIN OF TALKY-WALKY!!!

$3.99 | 9



DARK HORSE COMICS GROUP

# BLACK HAMMER

A STARTLING NEW ADVENTURE BEYOND THE STARS!

AFTER THE KING

DEEP SPACE.

THE OSLER STAR SYSTEM.

LONG AGO.

# THE BALLAD OF TALKY-WALKY

WE HAVE A PRIORITY ONE MISSION!

COME IN, COLONEL WEIRD!

COLONEL WEIRD!

COLONEL RANDALL WEIRD HERE, MISSION CONTROL.

I'M READING YOU LOUD AND CLEAR, OVER.

COLONEL, WE JUST RECEIVED A **DISTRESS BEACON** FROM AN **UNCHARTED PLANET** NOT FAR FROM YOUR CURRENT LOCATION...

WELL, THAT'S WHY IT'S WEIRD, WEIRD.

DISTRESS BEACON?

FROM WHOM?

SO IT MAKES NO SENSE.

OUR SENSORS SHOW THAT THERE IS NO SENTIENT LIFE ON THAT PLANET.

SOUNDS LIKE MY KIND OF **MYSTERY** IN SPACE.

I'LL CHECK IT OUT, MISSION CONTROL.

TELL EVE I WON'T BE HOME FOR VALENTINE'S DAY AFTER ALL, BUT I'LL MAKE IT UP TO HER!

AND SOON...

PING! PING!

KZZZTT

I'M DOING A PERIMETER SWEEP, MISSION CONTROL.

SO FAR NO SIGN OF ANY TROUBLE.

THE DISTRESS BEACON IS GETTING STRONGER, THOUGH.

WHAT WAS THAT, CONTROL?

YOU SEEM TO BE BREAKING UP.

ZZPPPT

OKAY, I'VE LOST THE BEACON AND I SEEM TO HAVE LOST YOU, CONTROL.

SOME STRANGE RADIO WAVES AROUND HERE.

YOU SURE THERE IS NO SENTIENT LIFE ON THIS PLANET?

KZZZTT

RINGS OF SATURN! I'M UNDER ATTACK!!

T-ZAK

T-ZAK

BETTER THINK QUICK, RANDY, OR IT WON'T JUST BE THIS VALENTINE'S DAY YOU'LL BE MISSING!

HALT, ORGANIC LIFE FORM!

LOWER YOUR WEAPON OR YOU WILL BE VAPORIZED!

WHAT THE BLUE BLAZES?!

NO CARBON-BASED LIFE FORMS ARE ALLOWED ON OUR PLANET.

YOU ARE TRESPASSING.

HE LOOKS LIKE A DUMB BAG OF MEAT!

ZAP HIM, BOSS!

I'LL SHOW YOU A BAG OF MEAT, YOU ROBO-APE!

CLAC!

I'M OUTNUM-BERED!

I HAVE TO GET BACK TO THE SHIP!

NO WONDER MISSION CONTROL DIDN'T SENSE ANY LIFE FORMS DOWN HERE!

THEY WERE ONLY LOOKING FOR **ORGANIC** LIFE!

THERE IS NO TELLING HOW MANY OF THESE CRAZED ROBOTS THERE ARE!

OH NO!

I'VE GOTTEN TURNED AROUND.

I HAVE NO CHOICE! I'LL HAVE TO MAKE A STAND!

SKRRRRRRR--

DROP YOUR WEAPON.

YOU HAVE NO CHANCE AGAINST US ALL, FLESH THING.

MAYBE NOT.

BUT I'M NOT GOING DOWN WITHOUT A FIGHT!

WHAT THE--?!

HURRY!

THEY WILL KILL YOU!!

NO TIME FOR INTRODUCTIONS NOW, HUMAN!

WHO-- WHO ARE YOU?!

WHY ARE YOU HELPING ME?!

CLIMB!

WELL, WHOEVER YOU ARE...

CHOOMMM!!

...I HAVE THE FEELING THIS IS THE BEGINNING OF A BEAUTIFUL FRIENDSHIP!

BLACK HAMMER FARM.

NOW.

ZZT--OLONEL?

ZTT--WHA--ZZT--!!

WHAT IS--

--ZTT!!

I-I AM SO SORRY, TALKY-WALKY.

ZZZK--!!

--WHY DID YOU--

--SHOOT?

SHHH...

DON'T TRY TO SPEAK, OLD FRIEND.

IT WILL ALL BE OVER SOON.

DO NOT--

--ZZT--

--UNDERSTAND--

I KNOW YOU DON'T.

HOW COULD YOU?

BUT YOU NEED TO KNOW I WOULD NEVER HAVE HURT YOU IF I'D HAD ANY OTHER CHOICE.

YOU HAVE BEEN SO GOOD TO ME... THE BEST FRIEND I HAVE EVER HAD.

ZAP!

GOODBYE, TALKY.

HOLD ON!

THAT WAS A CLOSE ONE!

THANKS FOR THE SAVE, UH... WHAT DO I CALL YOU, ANYWAY?

MY NAME IS TLK-E WLK-E.

TALKY-WALKY?

NO, TLK-E WLK-E.

THAT'S WHAT I SAID.

TALKY-WALKY.

›SIGH‹

YOUR HUMAN TONGUE CANNOT QUITE GET THE SUBTLETY OF THE INFLECTION.

NEVER MIND.

WE HAVE MORE PRESSING MATTERS TO DEAL WITH!

CHRHKKK...!!!

OH DEAR! WE'VE BEEN HIT!

KT

BRACE FOR IMPACT!

WE ARE GOING DOWN!!!

# CRASH!

HUMAN MALE...

...HUMAN MALE, WAKE UP!

EVE?

WHA--?

WHERE--?

YOU MUST GET UP!

THEY ARE COMING!

OUCH.

NOT EXACTLY A SMOOTH LANDING.

I BELIEVE YOU HAVE SUSTRINED NO LIFE-THREATENING INJURIES.

MY AIRSHIP IS NO LONGER FUNCTIONAL, THOUGH.

WE WILL HAVE TO CONTINUE ON FOOT.

I-I HAVE A SHIP.

A SPACECRAFT.

IF WE CAN FIND IT, WE CAN GET OFF THIS CRAZY KILLER ROBO-WORLD!

YES, MY SENSORS HAVE LOCATED IT.
IF WE HURRY WE CAN MAKE IT.
BUT THE OTHERS WILL BE HEADED THAT WAY AS WELL!

THEN LEAD THE WAY, WALKY-TALKY!

IT IS TLK-E WLK-E.

OH, RIGHT.

TALKY-WALKY, SORRY.

NOT TALKY--

OH, NEVER MIND!

SO, WHY ARE YOU HELPING ME, ANYWAY?

SEEMS LIKE THE OTHER BOTS ON THIS PLANET HATE HUMANS.

THE NAME'S WEIRD... COLONEL RANDALL WEIRD.

YES, WELL, I HAVE NEVER BEEN MUCH LIKE THE OTHER ROBOTS. HUMAN MALE.

COLONEL WEIRD.

IT IS VERY NICE TO MEET YOU.

YOU ARE THE FIRST NON-SILICON-BASED LIFE FORM I HAVE MET.

THOUGH I AM QUITE FAMILIAR WITH YOUR PLANET AND YOUR CULTURE.

I WATCH A LOT OF TELEVISION.

IN FACT, THAT IS WHY I SENT THE DISTRESS CALL INTO DEEP SPACE.

I WAS HOPING ONE OF YOUR KIND WOULD HEAR AND FIND ME HERE.

BUT HOW DO YOU KNOW ABOUT EARTH?

YOU SENT THE DISTRESS CALL!

OF COURSE!

SO I DEVELOPED DEEP SPACE PROBE SATELLITES THAT I LAUNCHED INTO ORBIT TO LOOK FOR OTHER SIGNS OF LIFE.

MY PROBES PICKED UP TELEVISION SIGNALS FROM YOUR PLANET AND BROADCAST THEM BACK HERE TO ME.

HA!

GOOD ONE, TALKY.

BUT REALLY, HOW DO YOU KNOW ABOUT EARTH?

I DO IN FACT WATCH A LOT OF TELEVISION.

I AM QUITE SERIOUS, COLONEL RANDALL WEIRD.

THAT IS NEW TECHNOPOLIS. THAT IS WHERE I LIVE, ALONG WITH ALL THE OTHER ROBOTS THAT INHABIT THIS WORLD.

BUT UNLIKE THE OTHERS, I HAVE ALWAYS BEEN CURIOUS.

THEY ALL ARE PERFECTLY CONTENT TO JUST STAY HERE.

BUT I HAVE ALWAYS LONGED TO SEE WHAT ELSE IS OUT THERE.

I LONG TO GO THERE AND TO ESCAPE THIS MUNDANE ROBO-DICTATORSHIP.

THROUGH THEM I LEARNED MUCH ABOUT HUMANKIND AND YOUR WORLD.

WILL YOU TAKE ME WITH YOU, COLONEL RANDALL WEIRD?

BLACK HAMMER FARM.

NOW.

APA!!

COLONEL! YOU STARTLED ME.

AH...I APOLOGIZE, LUCY.

I DID NOT MEAN TO SCARE YOU.

I DID NOT KNOW YOU WOULD BE DOWN HERE.

I WAS JUST GOING THROUGH ALL OF THIS OLD STUFF YOU GUYS HAVE STORED DOWN HERE.

LOOKING FOR... LOOKING FOR ANY KIND OF CLUES ABOUT WHERE WE ARE, I GUESS.

WHAT ARE YOU DOING DOWN HERE, COLONEL?

OH...

I COME DOWN HERE TO THINK SOMETIMES.

REALLY?

DOWN HERE?

YES.

IT IS... QUIET.

YEAH, I GUESS IT IS.

SO, WHAT'S GOT YOU THINKING TODAY, COLONEL?

WHAT'S ON YOUR MIND?

HAVE YOU EVER HAD TO SAY GOODBYE TO A GOOD FRIEND, LUCY?

SURE.

PEOPLE MOVE AWAY.

LIFE GOES ON.

YES.

IT DOES.

IN THE PARA-ZONE PAST AND FUTURE LIVE SIDE BY SIDE.

I KNOW WHAT HAPPENS NEXT.

I KNOW THERE IS NO FINALITY.

AND YET...

NOT REALLY.

WAIT.

ARE YOU SAYING THAT WHEN YOU GO TO THE PARA-ZONE YOU CAN SEE THE FUTURE?

THAT YOU KNOW WHAT WILL HAPPEN TO ALL OF US?

I, UM...

...I MAY HAVE SAID TOO MUCH.

THE THINGS I HAVE SEEN ARE VERY HARD TO EXPLAIN.

WHOA.

HOLD ON.

DO YOU KNOW IF AND HOW WE GET OUT OF HERE?!

DO YOU KNOW HOW WE GET OFF THE FARM?!

I CANNOT TELL YOU THAT.

THIS CONVERSA-TION IS ABOUT TO END.

NO WAY.

YOU DON'T GET OFF THAT EASY!

IF YOU KNOW SOMETHING...

I HAVE SEEN THIS CONVER-SATION.

IT DOES NOT END IN A SATISFYING WAY FOR YOU, LUCY. I AM SORRY.

COLONEL?!

SURPRISE

WILL YOU TAKE ME WITH YOU, COLONEL WEIRD?

I-I AM SORRY, TALKY.

COLONEL?!

PLEASE! OH PLEASE, WILL YOU TAKE ME AWAY WITH YOU?!

WELL, I DON'T KNOW, TALKY-WALKY.

THERE ARE PROTOCOLS WHEN DEALING WITH NEW--

I CANNOT BEAR ANOTHER MOMENT LIVING IN SECLUSION HERE!

I LONG FOR FREEDOM AND ADVENTURE!

COLONEL?

NO OFFENSE, TALKY...

T-CK-KKK

SRAKK

BUT YOU BETTER MOVE!

GET DOWN!!

TLK E WLK E. YOU TRAITOR!

YOU WILL BE REPROGRAMMED FOR THIS!

RUN, TALKY!

THIS WAY!

WELL, YOU SAID YOU WANTED ADVENTURE, TALKY...

...YOU STICK WITH ME AND I THINK YOU'LL GET YOUR WISH!

DOES THAT MEAN YOU WILL TAKE ME TO EARTH?

T-ZAP!

EARTH?

WHY STOP AT EARTH, TALKY, WHEN WE HAVE THE ENTIRE UNIVERSE TO EXPLORE?

RUST

KZZT!

KZZT!!

ZZT--

--HELLO?

HELLO?

COLONEL?

ANYONE?

IS--

--IS ANYBODY THERE?

PLEASE...

...ANYBODY.

CAN YOU HEAR ME?

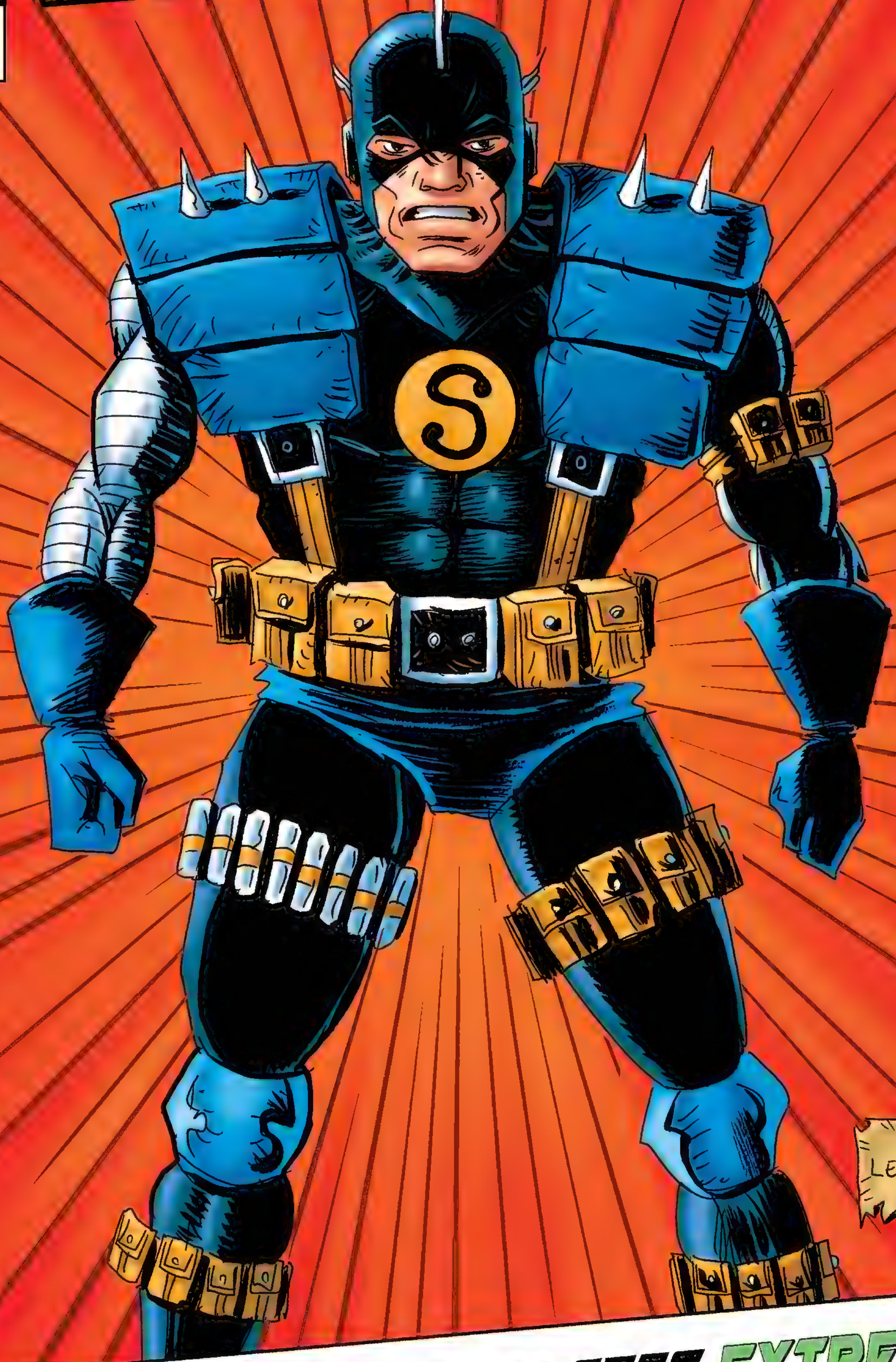
WHERE--?

WHERE AM I??

DARK HORSE COMICS

$3.99 | 10

# BLACK HAMMER




## ABRAHAM SLAM GETS EXTREME!!

SPIRAL CITY.

SPIRAL CITY COSTUME

KNOCK, KNOCK. ANYONE HOME?

ABRAHAM SLAM. ALWAYS GOOD TO SEE YOU.

SO, IS IT READY?

IT IS. BUT--

WHAT? IS SOMETHING WRONG?

NO. IT CAME TOGETHER ALL RIGHT. IT'S JUST--WELL, I'VE MADE A ***LOT*** OF COSTUMES FOR A ***LOT*** OF HEROES, BUT I NEVER THOUGHT I'D MAKE SOMETHING ***LIKE THIS*** FOR YOU.

I GOTTA KEEP UP WITH THE TIMES, SMITH.

I GUESS SO.

HERE'S THE FIRST PAYMENT. SORRY I CAN'T GET IT ALL TO YOU RIGHT AWAY. THE GYM HAS BEEN A BIT SLOW LATELY.

IT'S ALL RIGHT, ABE. I KNOW YOU'RE GOOD FOR IT. I MEAN, IF I CAN'T TRUST ABRAHAM SLAM, WHO ***CAN*** I TRUST, RIGHT.

YOU SAID IT, METALSMITH. AND THANKS AGAIN!

SPIRAL CITY BOXING
...GOTTA KEEP UP WITH THE TIMES.

Baaaahhh!

HUSH NOW, I ALREADY FED YOU.

LUCY?!

ABE, WALKY-- SHE--I THINK SHE'S DAMAGED *REALLY* BADLY.

CAREFUL.

I AIN'T THAT OLD.

YOU JUST-- YOU FOUND HER LIKE THIS?

YES, I--

--I GOT UP EARLY TO DO SOME WRITING AND I CAME OUT TO SEE IF SHE'D--

IF SHE WHAT?

WALKY AND I TALKED YESTERDAY. WE WERE THINKING ABOUT A NEW WAY OF MAYBE GETTING OFF THE FARM. SHE WAS *EXCITED* ABOUT IT AND GOT TO WORK, SO I LEFT HER ALONE.

ABE, THIS ISN'T THE *ONLY* STRANGE THING I'VE FOUND SINCE I GOT HERE.

WHAT DO YOU MEAN?

I SPENT SOME TIME AT THE LIBRARY YESTERDAY. EVERY BOOK ABOUT THE TOWN'S HISTORY WAS *BLANK.*

BLANK? THAT'S--WHAT DOES *THAT* MATTER?

WHAT DOES IT *MATTER?* ABE, DON'T YOU FIND THAT JUST A LITTLE ODD? I MEAN, THIS WHOLE *PLACE* IS ODD. YOU'RE ALL *PRISONERS* HERE AND YOU SEEM TO HAVE STOPPED LOOKING FOR A WAY OUT, OR EVEN ASKING THE MOST OBVIOUS QUESTIONS.

WE ARE NOT PRISONERS! THIS IS *NO JAIL,* LUCY. THERE'S-- THERE'S *NOTHING WRONG* WITH THIS PLACE.

NOW, IF YOU'LL EXCUSE ME, I HAVE TO FIND THE COLONEL SO WE CAN SEE WHAT'S WRONG WITH *TALKY-WALKY!*

HUMPH!

UH, I ORDERED NO CHEESE.

YEAH, WELL, YOU'RE GETTING CHEESE TODAY, CALEB. IT'S TOO DAMN BUSY IN HERE AND I'M WORKING MY TAIL OFF!

MENU

OH, GREAT. JUST WHAT I NEED.

A WORD, TAMMY.

A LITTLE BUSY RIGHT NOW, EARL. YOU'LL HAVE TO COME BACK LATER.

NOW, TAMMY.

TAKE A BREAK, FLOYD.

YOU CAN'T JUST COME IN HERE AND ORDER MY STAFF ABOUT LIKE YOU *OWN* THE PLACE, EARL!

WHY NOT? MY DAMN ALIMONY PAYMENTS PAY FOR THE PLACE.

WHAT DO YOU WANT, EARL?

I SEE YOU HAD YOURSELF A LITTLE DINNER PARTY THE OTHER NIGHT.

HAVE YOU-- HAVE YOU BEEN *FOLLOWING* ME?

IT'S MY JOB TO PATROL THIS TOWN, TAMMY.

HOW DARE YOU SLEEP AROUND? OUR *DIVORCE* ISN'T EVEN FINAL YET. YOU'RE STILL *MY* WIFE.

DON'T CARE IF WE HAVE PAPERS THAT SAY SO OR NOT. I HAVEN'T BEEN YOUR WIFE FOR A *LONG TIME,* EARL.

BELIEVING THAT MAKE IT EASIER FOR YOU TO *SLUT AROUND* WITH THAT OLD BASTARD?

*ASSHOLE!*

AH, AH! DON'T WANT TO DO THAT. YOU HIT ME, I PROMISE YOU THIS--

--I'LL HIT YOU BACK A *WHOLE LOT HARDER.*

KNOCK KNOCK

MARK? IS EVERYTHING ALL RIGHT?

YES. SORRY, I, UH... THOUGHT MAYBE I'D TAKE YOU UP ON THAT OFFER OF A DRINK?

I BROUGHT *REALLY* CHEAP WINE.

HOW COULD I REFUSE AN OFFER LIKE THAT?

SO--AND FORGIVE ME IF THIS IS BEING TOO NOSEY-- BUT WHAT DO YOU DO EXACTLY, MARK?

"DO"?

WELL, I KNOW YOUR UNCLE ABE FARMS, BUT--

OH. WELL, IT'S A BIT EMBARRASSING, BUT I ACTUALLY INHERITED A LOT OF MONEY FROM MY OWN PARENTS WHEN THEY PASSED, SO...

AH, I SEE. SO, YOU'RE INDEPENDENT. AND SINGLE.

YES.

NOTHING TO BE EMBARRASSED ABOUT, MARK. I JUST WONDERED-- WELL, I WONDERED WHAT YOU WANTED?

WANTED?

IN *LIFE*? AGAIN, I KNOW I'M BEING NOSEY, IT'S MY SIN. I CAN'T HELP MYSELF.

YOU DON'T HAVE TO WORK, BUT YOU MUST HAVE AMBITIONS. YOU DON'T STRIKE ME AS...

LAZY?

HEH. LET'S SAY LETHARGIC.

SO TELL ME, MARK, WHAT *DO* YOU WANT?

WELL, I THINK THAT'S WHY I'M SO GLAD WE'VE-- WE'VE BECOME FRIENDS. I'VE FELT A BIT AIMLESS FOR QUITE A WHILE, TO BE HONEST.

BUT WHEN I'M WITH YOU, I-- I FEEL *MYSELF* AGAIN.

MARK, WHAT ARE YOU DOING?!

I THOUGHT--

I'M SORRY IF I GAVE YOU THE WRONG IMPRESSION, MARK.

BUT--

I THINK IT'S BEST IF YOU LEAVE.

WAIT A MINUTE, I-- YOU CAN'T DO THIS.

EXCUSE ME?!

YOU CAN'T PRETEND YOU'RE NOT INTERESTED IN ME! I MEAN--YOU INVITED ME OVER AND--

I THOUGHT YOU NEEDED A FRIEND, MARK. A *FRIEND.*

I--I DO NEED A FRIEND. AND SO DO **YOU.** I UNDERSTAND IF YOU'RE SCARED. I WAS TOO...

PLEASE **LEAVE,** MARK.

BAR

GRAARRRGHHH!! MUD MASTER IS HUNGRY!!

OH SHIT!

BLAM! BLAM!

OVER HERE, YOU BIG BALL OF GOOP...

IF YOU'RE HUNGRY, I GOT A *KNUCKLE SANDWICH* WITH *YOUR* NAME ON IT, SLIMEBALL.

IS--IS THAT--

--ABRAHAM *SLAM*?!

GRAAAARRR!!

:UNGH!:

PING!

PING!

AH, CRAP!

MUD MASTER GONNA EAT YOU, OLD MAN!

SHRACK!

STEP ASIDE, GRAMPS. Y-FORCE CAN HANDLE THIS!

DON'T BE RUDE, *ANIMOSITY*, THAT'S *ABRAHAM SLAM!* HE'S *O.G.!*

Y-FORCE?

YEAH. YOU KNOW, IT STANDS FOR LIKE, *YOUTH* FORCE.

WONDERFUL. ISN'T IT PAST YOUR BEDTIME?

IS THAT REALLY ***YOU***, ABRAHAM SLAM? WHAT'S WITH THE GET-UP?

***NOTHING*** IS WITH THE ***GET UP.*** JUST TRYING SOMETHING NEW.

I HAD THIS UNDER CONTROL.

UH, REALLY?

YES, REALLY! I JUST NEED TO GET A BIT MORE USED TO THE COSTUME. I WAS ABOUT TO TURN THE ***TABLES*** ON HIM.

AH, CHRIST!

:SNICKER:

LISTEN, UH, MISTER SLAM. DO YOU WANT US TO DROP YOU ***OFF*** SOMEWHERE ON OUR WAY BACK TO Y-TOWER? I CAN CARRY YOU AS WE FLY.

I DON'T NEED YOU TO ***CARRY ME*** ANYWHERE, YOUNG LADY!

SORRY. I WAS JUST TRYING TO HELP.

I DON'T ***NEED*** YOUR HELP!

EXTRA!
GHT
N
VS.
ABE
SLAM
STUPID OLD MAN. YOU EMBARRASSED YOURSELF OUT THERE. FACE IT, IT'S *OVER.*
WHAM!
BED

TAMMY?

WHAT'S WRONG, DARLIN'? WHERE IS EVERYONE?

ABE. I-- I CLOSED EARLY. SENT EVERYONE HOME.

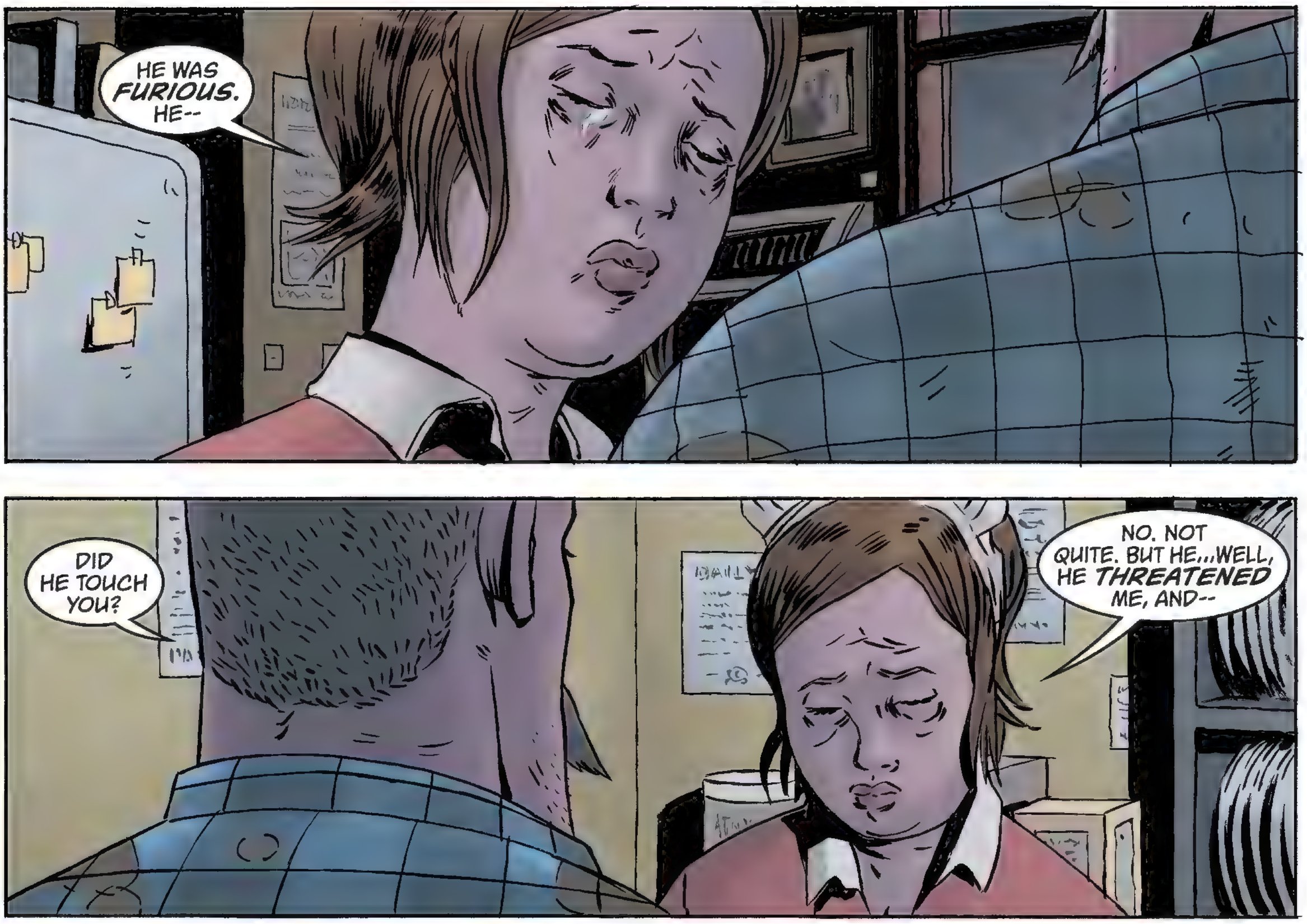
WHAT HAPPENED?

EARL. HE--I'VE NEVER ***SEEN*** HIM LIKE THAT BEFORE, ABE.

WHAT DID HE DO?

I--I DON'T WANT YOU TO OVERREACT, ABE.

***WHAT*** DID HE ***DO,*** TAMMY?


HE WAS FURIOUS. HE--
DID HE TOUCH YOU?
NO. NOT QUITE. BUT HE...WELL, HE THREATENED ME, AND--
I'M GOING TO KILL HIM.
ABRAHAM! DO NOT DO ANYTHING STUPID!
TOO LATE.
ABE!!

H-HOW THE HELL DID YOU GET IN HERE?!

I GO WHERE I PLEASE, SHERIFF. YOU SHOULD *NOT* HAVE THREATENED TAMMY...

YOU ARE A MYSTERY TO ME, SHERIFF. AND NORMALLY I *ENJOY* MYSTERIES...BUT NOT THIS TIME.

YOU--YOU ARE UNDER ARREST FOR *TRESPASSING!*

NO. I'M NOT.

YOU SEE, IT'S *YOU* WHO ARE IN TROUBLE, SHERIFF. YOU'VE DEVELOPED TOO MUCH FREE WILL. YOU'VE BECOME THE ONE THING I *CANNOT* ALLOW HERE...

...A *SUPER VILLAIN.*

GOODBYE, EARL TRUEHEART.

DARK HORSE COMICS®

NO. 11

# BLACK HAMMER

## DOUBLE ACTION TEAM-UP

AND

## Golden Gail

## BARBALIEN

WARLORD FROM MARS!

## THE FURY OF THE ROBOTANIST

SPIRAL CITY.

3RD PRECINCT

ANOTHER DAY, ANOTHER DOLLAR, AM I RIGHT? SEE YOU TOMORROW, DETECTIVE.

BRIGHT AND EARLY.

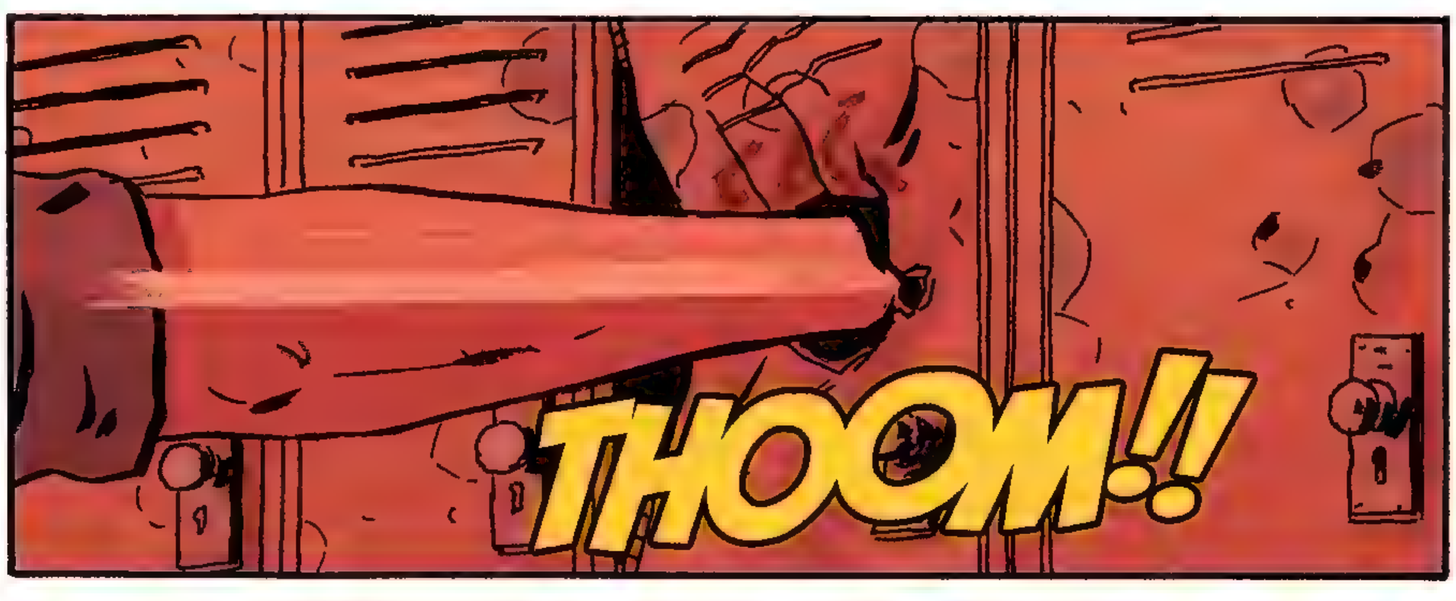
ANOTHER DAY, ANOTHER DOLLAR.

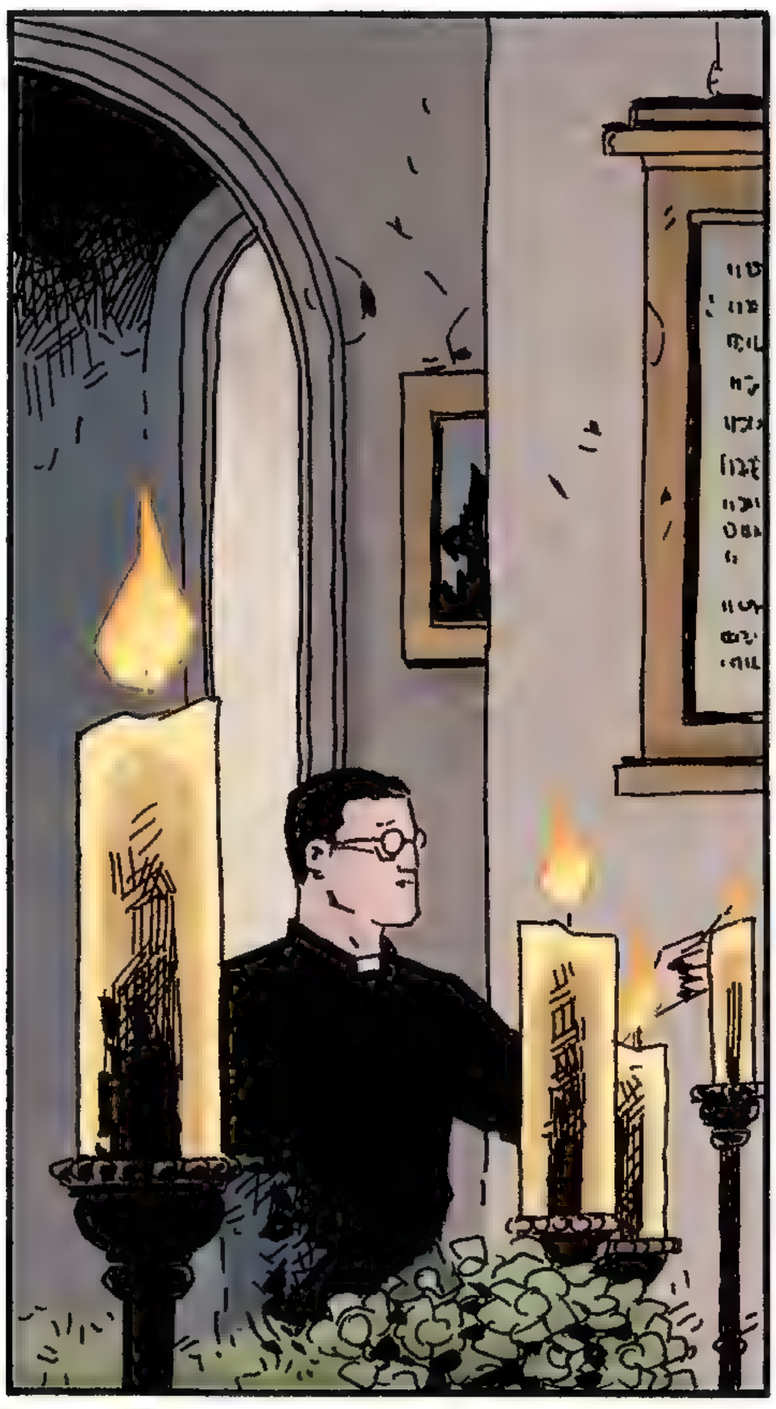
CITY BANK

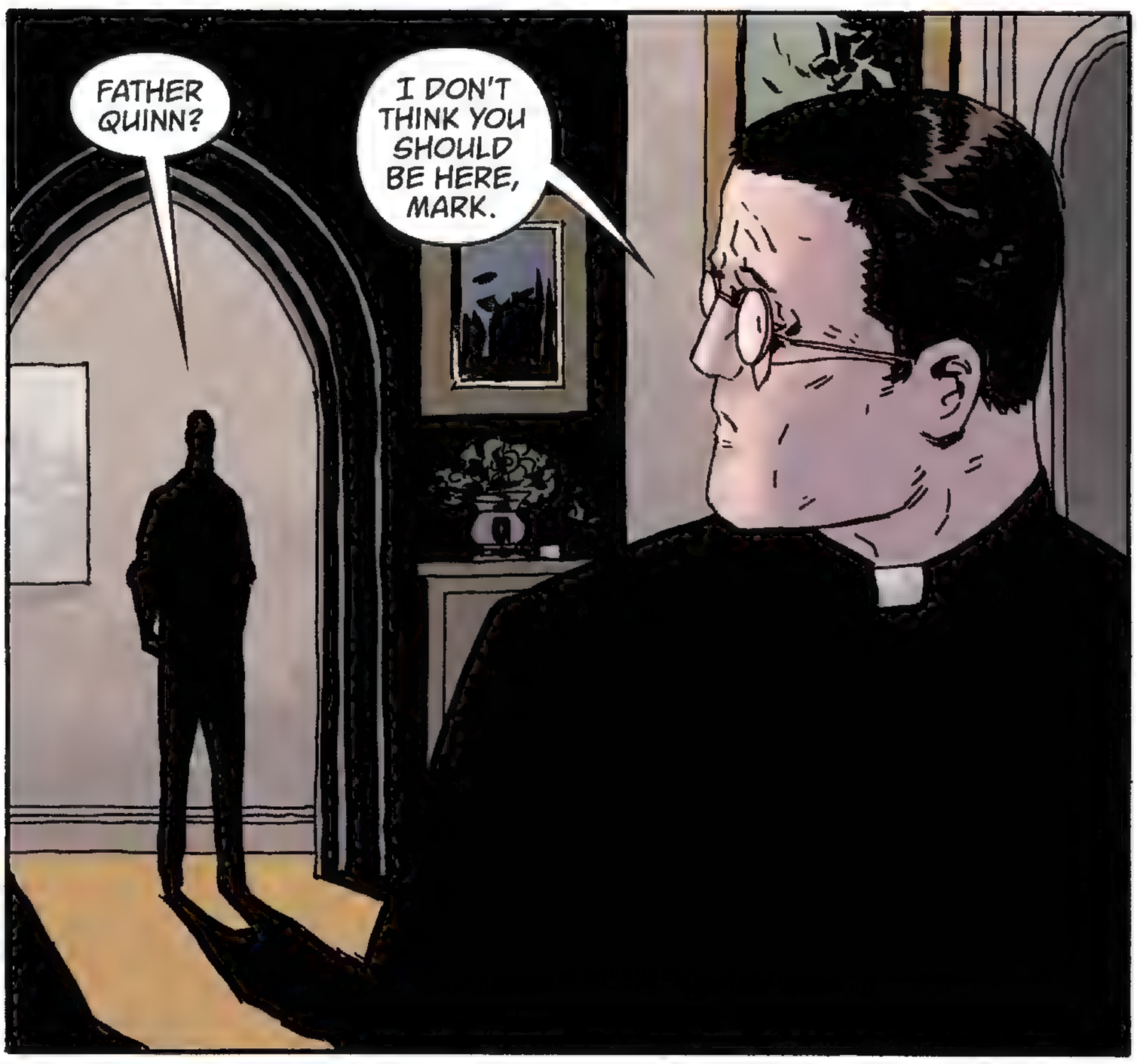
MORNING, DETECTIVE. LATE NIGHT?
YOU DON'T KNOW THE HALF OF IT.

MARKZ
FAG

MARKZ
FAG
BURKE
LENNI


THOOM!!




FATHER QUINN?
I DON'T THINK YOU SHOULD BE HERE, MARK.

I KNOW. I JUST WANT TO EXPLAIN.

EXPLAIN *WHAT,* MARK? IF YOU CAME TO APOLOGIZE...WELL, IT'S NOT *ME* YOU SHOULD BE MAKING YOUR PEACE WITH.

WHAT'S THAT SUPPOSED TO MEAN?

WHAT YOU DID...WHAT YOU DID WAS A SIN.

NOTHING HAPPENED.

WELL THEN, WHAT YOU *WANTED TO DO* WAS A SIN.

OH, PLEASE. I DIDN'T COME HERE TO APOLOGIZE TO YOU *OR* TO GOD.

THEN WHY *ARE* YOU HERE?

I'M HERE BECAUSE I ***KNOW*** YOU FEEL THE SAME WAY ABOUT ***ME*** AS I FEEL ABOUT ***YOU,*** PATRICK.

THAT'S NOT TRUE.

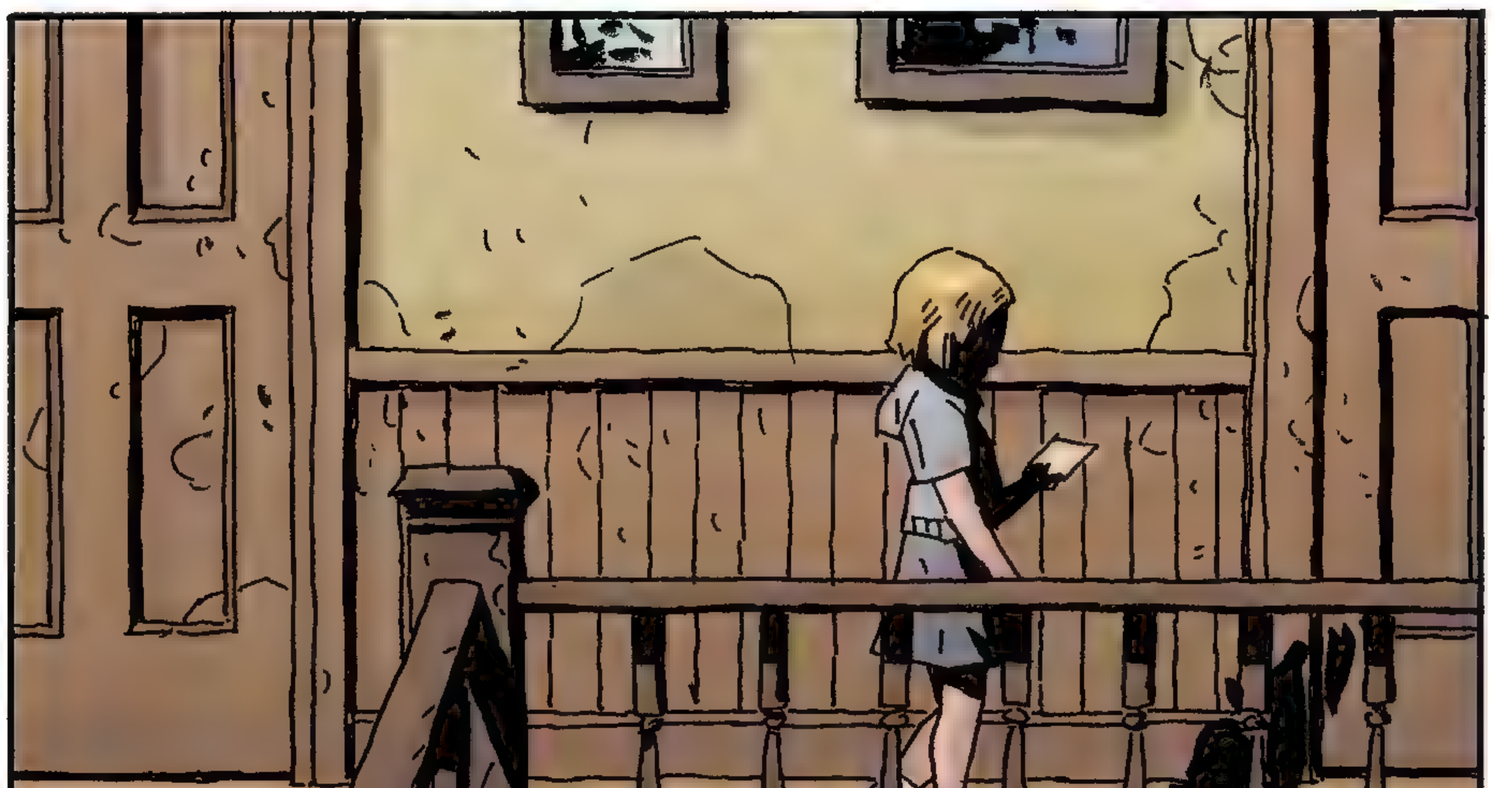
IT IS. FROM THE MOMENT WE SAW EACH OTHER WE FELT THE SAME. AT LEAST I HAD THE BALLS TO DO ***SOMETHING ABOUT IT.***

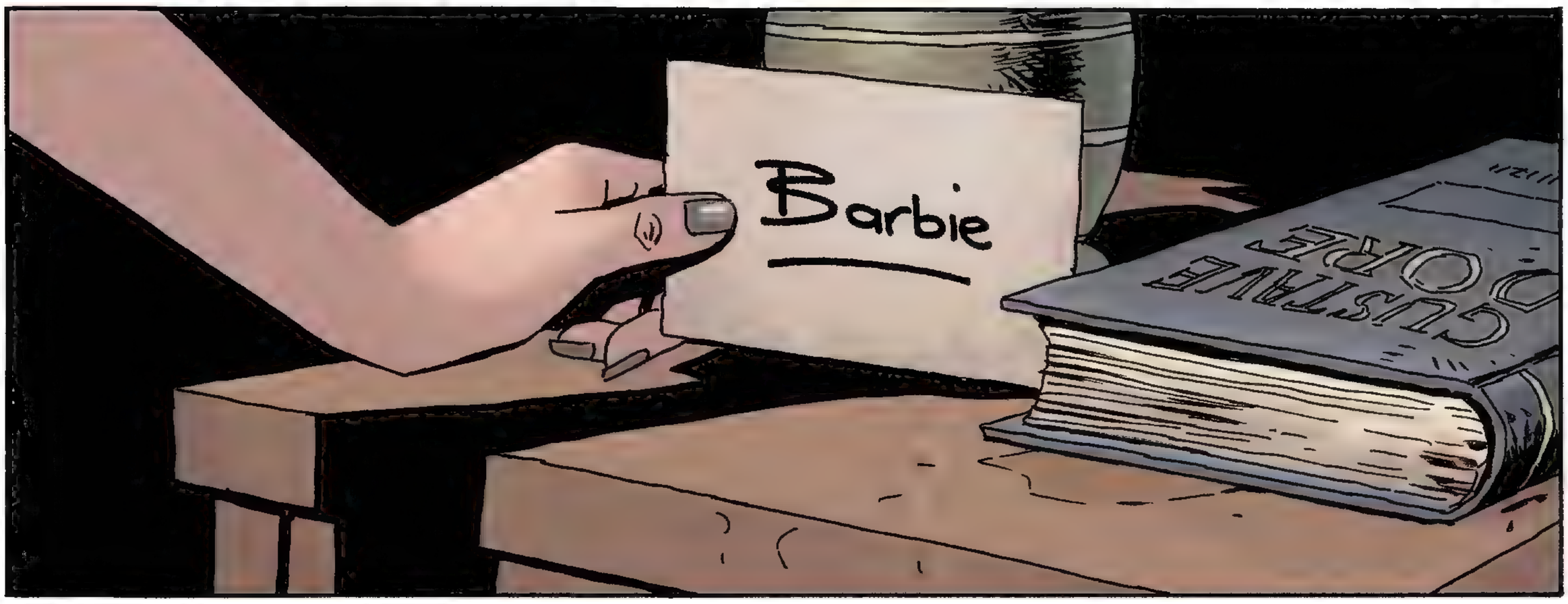
I SPENT ***A LOT OF YEARS*** HIDING BEHIND A MASK. I PRETENDED TO BE SOMETHING I'M NOT. AND ALL IT DID WAS MAKE ME EVEN LONELIER!

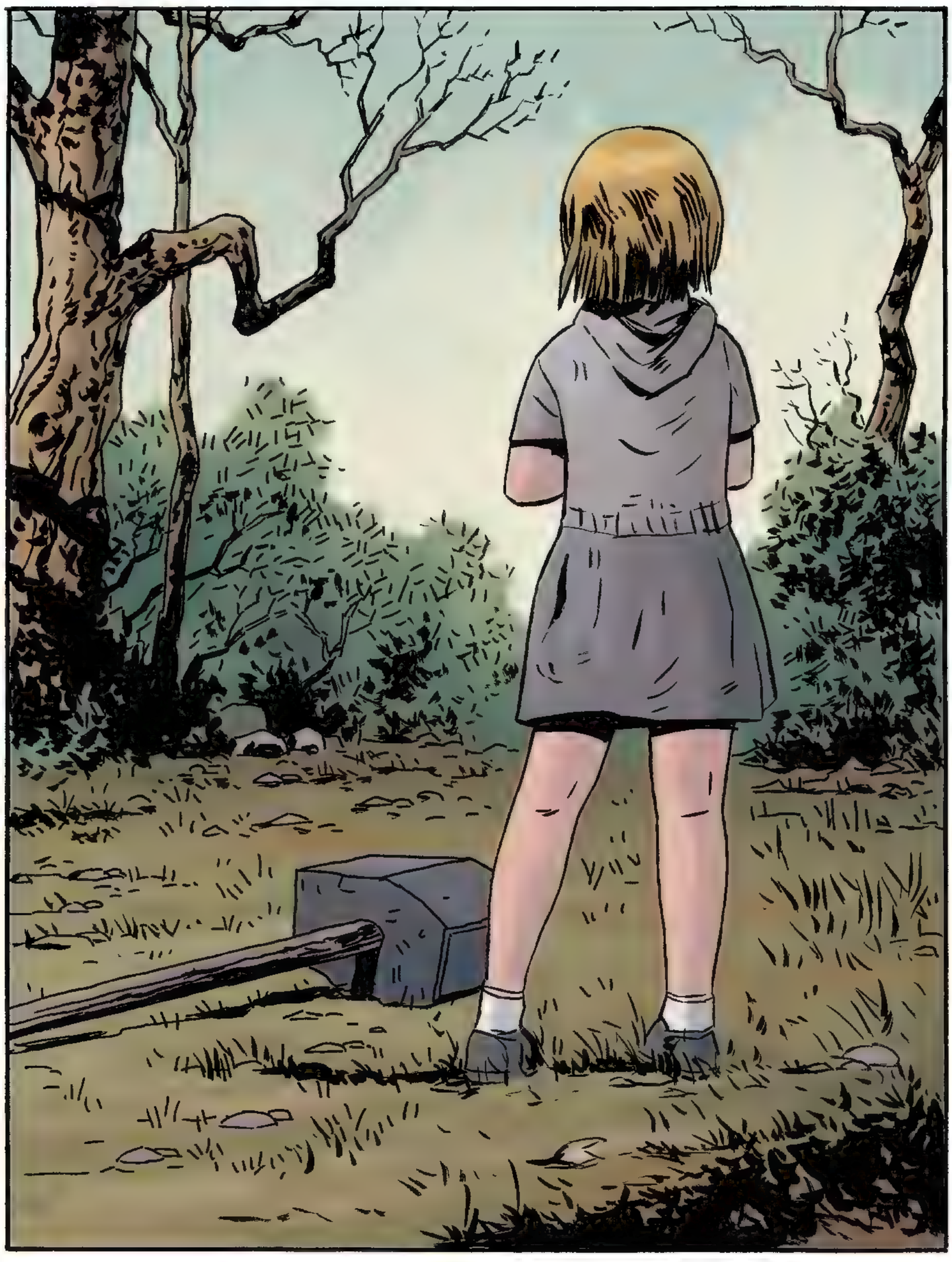
SO YOU CAN GO AHEAD AND KEEP HIDING BEHIND ALL OF THIS IF YOU WANT, BUT I ***REFUSE*** TO APOLOGIZE FOR WHO I AM.

I--I THINK IT'S BETTER IF YOU STAY AWAY FROM THE CHURCH FOR A WHILE.

DON'T WORRY, I ***WILL.*** THE ONLY REASON I CAME HERE IN THE FIRST PLACE WAS TO CHECK YOU OUT!

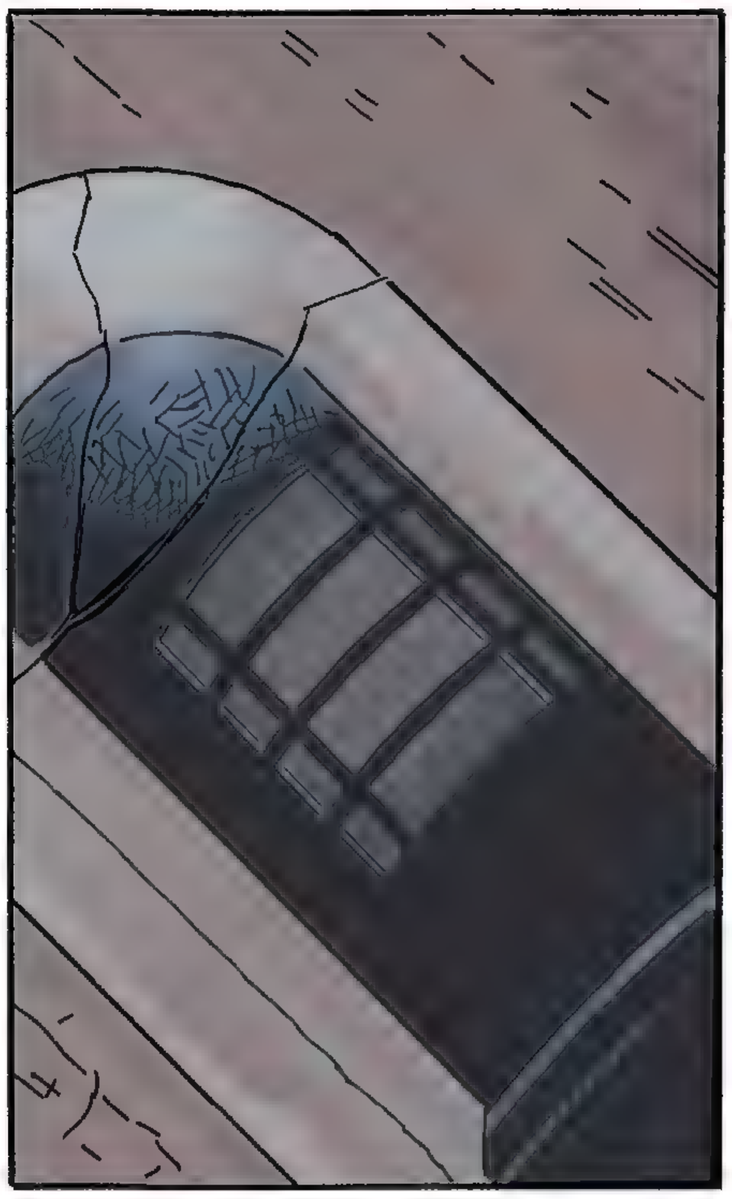


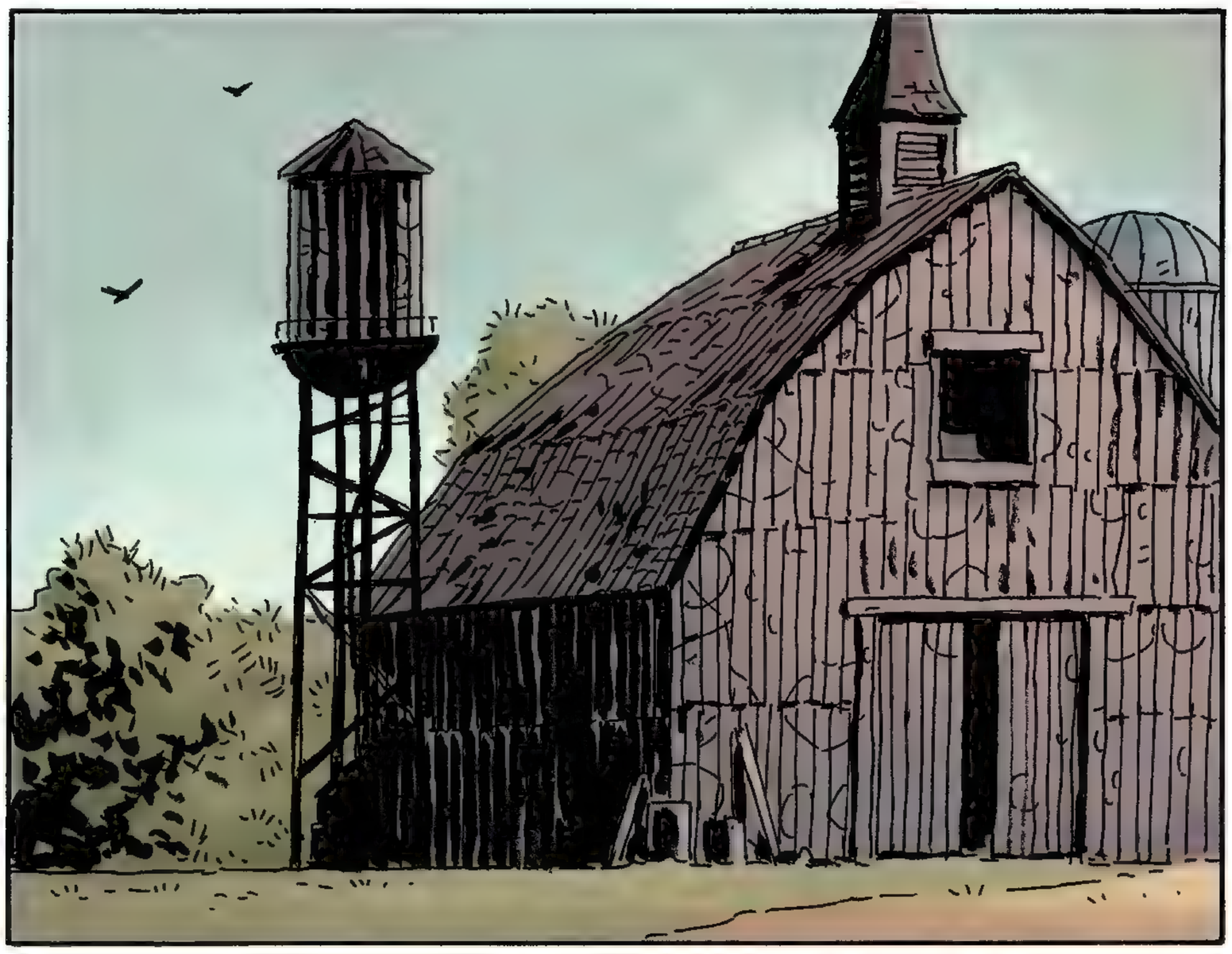

Barbie

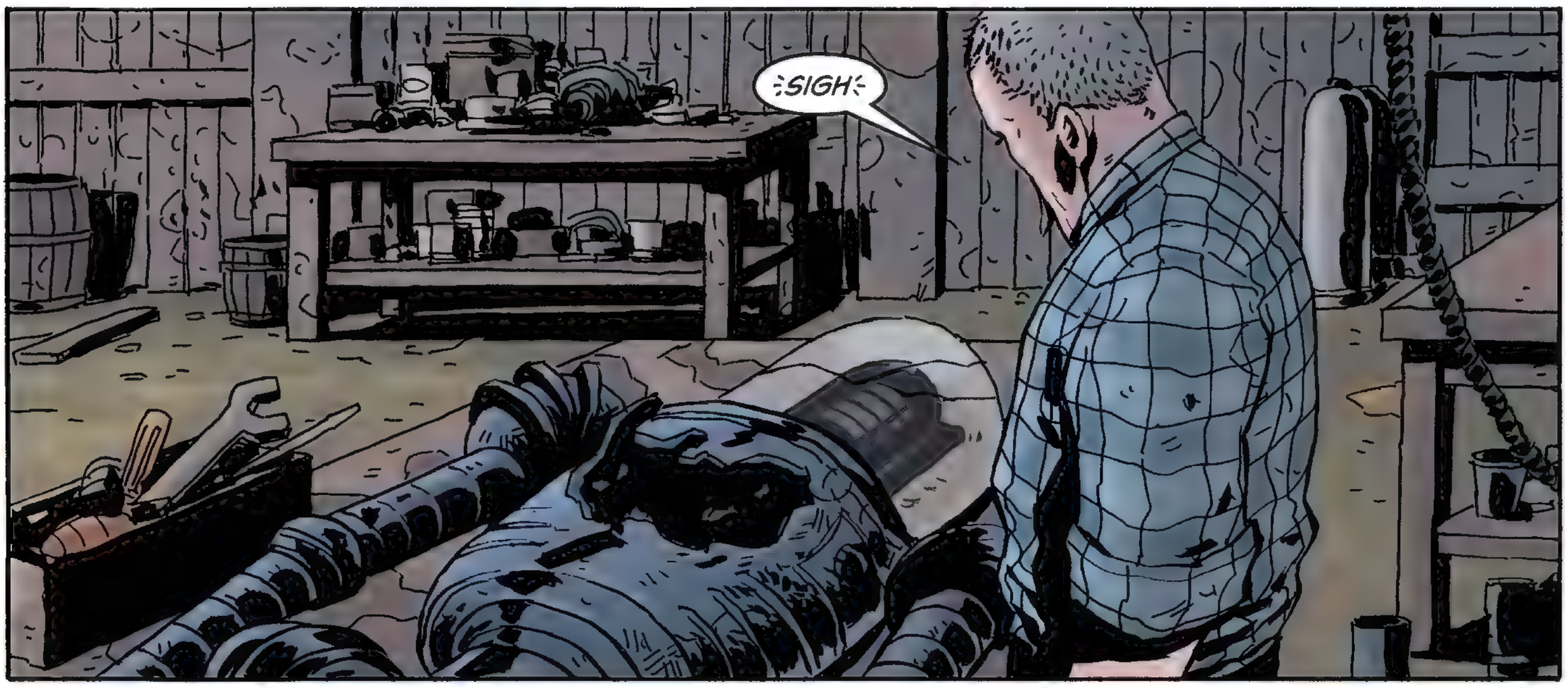


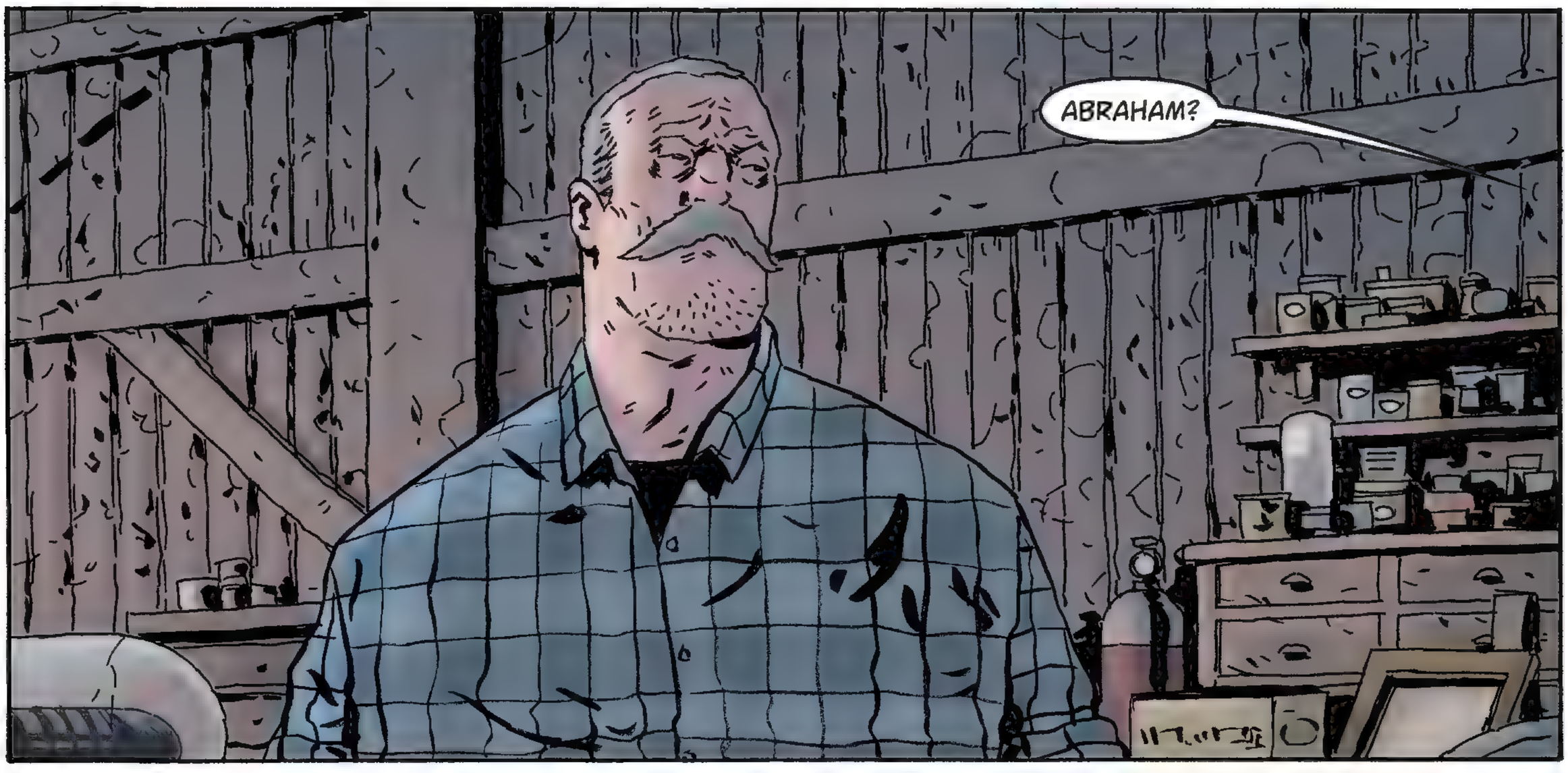
KZZT!

GOODBYE.






:SIGH:


ABRAHAM?

DEPUTIES. IS--IS SOMETHING WRONG?

POLICE

WELL... THAT DEPENDS, ABRAHAM.

DEPENDS ON WHAT?

ON WHAT KIND OF *ANSWERS* YOU GIVE US.

YOU ARE *WANTED FOR QUESTIONING* IN THE *DISAPPEARANCE* OF SHERIFF EARL TRUEHEART.

Something is very wrong and it's getting worse by the minute.

I don't even know where to start. But I'm a journalist so I start how I always start...I watch people.

This town is asleep.

Everyone is just going through the motions.

They are like someone's idea of a town. Like a sketch that wasn't quite finished.

Everything is in the right place. It all passes at a quick glance, but when you look you discover there's just not quite enough detail added.

A place with no history. A place out of time.

I mean, all the books in the library are fucking blank and no one seems to care?!

Could this be some other dimension? Some pocket reality? Superheroes deal with that stuff all the time, right?

That kind of science is way beyond me, though. I'm a journalist—not a physicist. Besides, none of that is really what's bugging me. What's really bugging me is that I don't remember how I got here.

This isn't like me. I always get the answers. But this time...this time I don't even know what the right questions are.

Yeah...something is really not right here.

I WISH YOU'D RECONSIDER. YOU'RE ONE OF THE FINEST DETECTIVES WE HAVE.

POLICE

WE CAN'T AFFORD TO LOSE YOU.

THANK YOU, SERGEANT...

FAG

...BUT THERE'S JUST NO PLACE FOR ME HERE ANY-MORE.

GOODBYE.

Barbie

Barbie

Barbie,

Please forgive me but I can't do it anymore. There's just no place for me here.

xx Gail

GOODBYE.

Barbie,

Please forgive me but I can't do it anymore. There's just no place for me here.

xx Gail

NO!!

ARRGH!

PLEASE!

WHAT ARE YOU DOING, GAIL?!

I--I JUST WANT IT TO END! I CAN'T KEEP DOING THIS, BARBIE. NOT *ALONE.*

BUT YOU'RE NOT ALONE. YOU HAVE *ME,* GAIL!

BUT I *SCREWED THAT* UP TOO. I THOUGHT-- I MEAN, I THOUGHT THAT YOU WERE... BUT THEN...

IT DOESN'T MATTER. NONE OF THAT MATTERS NOW. I LOVE YOU. YOU'RE *MY BEST FRIEND.*

SO YOU *CAN'T GO* BECAUSE I *NEED YOU,* GAIL.

OKAY?

:SNIFF: OKAY.

LET'S GO HOME.

HOME? WE'RE STUCK HERE. WE'LL *NEVER GO HOME,* BARBIE.

MAYBE NOT...

...BUT AT LEAST WE'VE GOT EACH OTHER.

# BLACK HAMMER™

WELCOME TO THE HALL OF HAMMER!

DARK HORSE COMICS

# BLACK HAMMER no.12

SPIRAL CITY.

TEN YEARS AGO.

-AHEM-

I, UM... I'M USED TO SPENDING DAYS ALONE IN MY LAB SO YOU'LL HAVE TO FORGIVE ME, I'M--UH...

...NOT MUCH OF A PUBLIC SPEAKER.

I SUPPOSE I SHOULD INTRODUCE MYSELF...

...MANY OF YOU PROBABLY DON'T REMEMBER ME, ESPECIALLY NOT *DRESSED LIKE THIS.*

MY NAME IS DR. **JAMES ROBINSON.** BUT ONCE I WAS ALSO KNOWN AS THE COSTUMED HERO ***DOCTOR STAR.***

AND I'VE COME HERE TODAY, WELL, FOR THE SAME REASON YOU ALL HAVE.

I'VE COME TO **REMEMBER.**

AND I'VE COME TO PAY MY RESPECTS TO A GROUP OF THE BRAVEST MEN AND WOMEN SPIRAL CITY, AND THE WORLD, HAS EVER SEEN...

ABRAHAM SLAM...

...GOLDEN GAIL...

...BARBALIEN...

...COLONEL WEIRD...

...MADAME DRAGONFLY...

...AND BLACK HAMMER.

THREE DAYS AGO THEY SAVED US ALL.

RIGHT HERE IN THE STREETS OF SPIRAL CITY THEY FOUGHT AND DEFEATED ANTI-GOD.

WE STILL DON'T FULLY UNDERSTAND WHO THIS "ANTI-GOD" WAS.

AND WE DON'T KNOW WHAT REALLY HAPPENED TO ABE AND GAIL AND THE OTHERS.

ALL WE KNOW FOR SURE IS THAT THEY ARE GONE.

AND IT WOULD SEEM THAT THEY SOMEHOW GAVE THEIR LIVES TO STOP THE CATACLYSM.

THE LAST THING ANYONE SAW WAS BLACK HAMMER DELIVERING THE FINAL BLOW AND ANTI-GOD EXPLODING IN A FLASH OF LIGHT AND ENERGY.

THE WORKING THEORY IS THAT THE HEROES WERE ENVELOPED AND DESTROYED IN THE EXPLOSION AS WELL.

WHEN ANTI-GOD FIRST APPEARED AND THE CATACLYSM STARTED, I CONSIDERED GETTING MY OLD COSTUME AND TRYING TO HELP.

BUT I--

I THOUGHT I WAS TOO OLD TO HELP.

THEN I SAW **ABRAHAM SLAM** ON THE NEWS.

SAME AGE AS ME, AND THERE HE WAS RUNNING INTO BATTLE WITHOUT A SECOND THOUGHT.

THAT'S WHAT ALWAYS SEPARATED ABE, GAIL, AND BLACK HAMMER FROM THE REST OF US. THEY--

--THEY NEVER HESITATED.

THEY NEVER STOPPED TO WORRY ABOUT THEMSELVES.

...IT'S EMPTIER WITHOUT THEM.

TRUTH IS, THE WORLD HAS CHANGED...

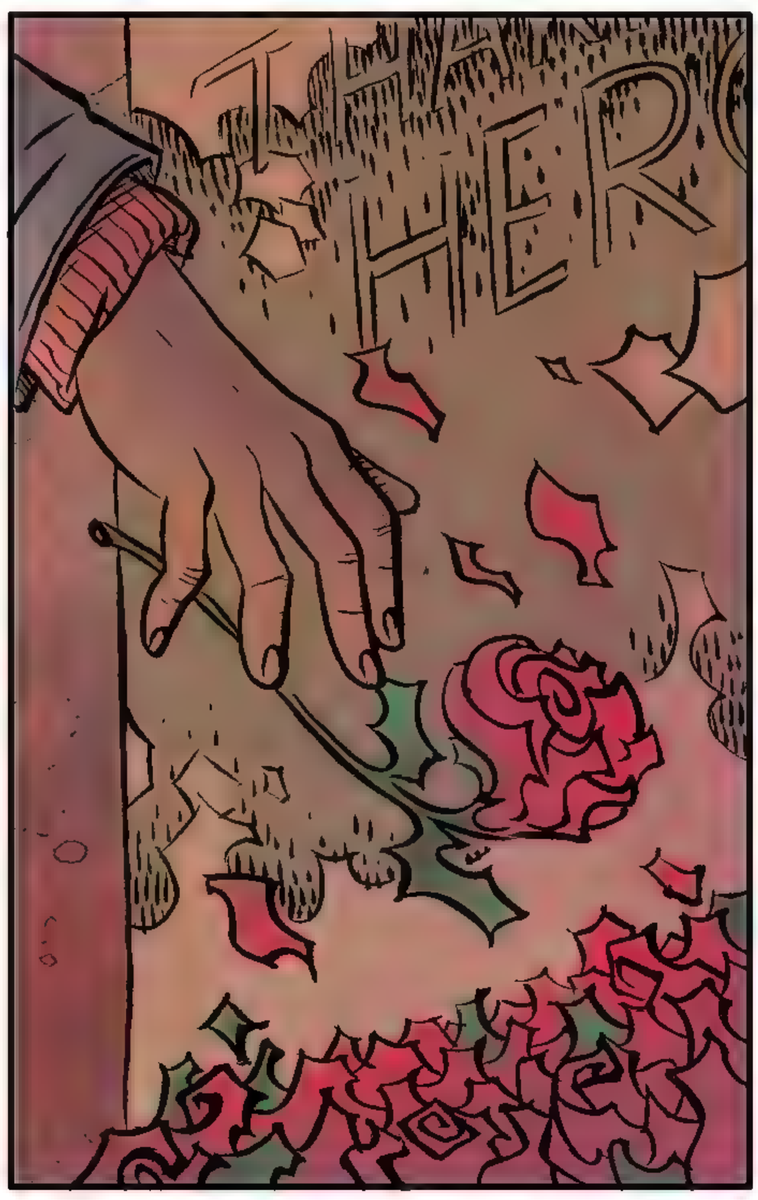
SOMETHING IS MISSING...

BUT WE WILL NEVER FORGET THEM.

THE REST OF US WERE JUST *PRETENDERS* IN FUNNY COSTUMES.

...THEY ARE **MISSING** AND THERE IS NO EASY WAY TO REPLACE THEM.

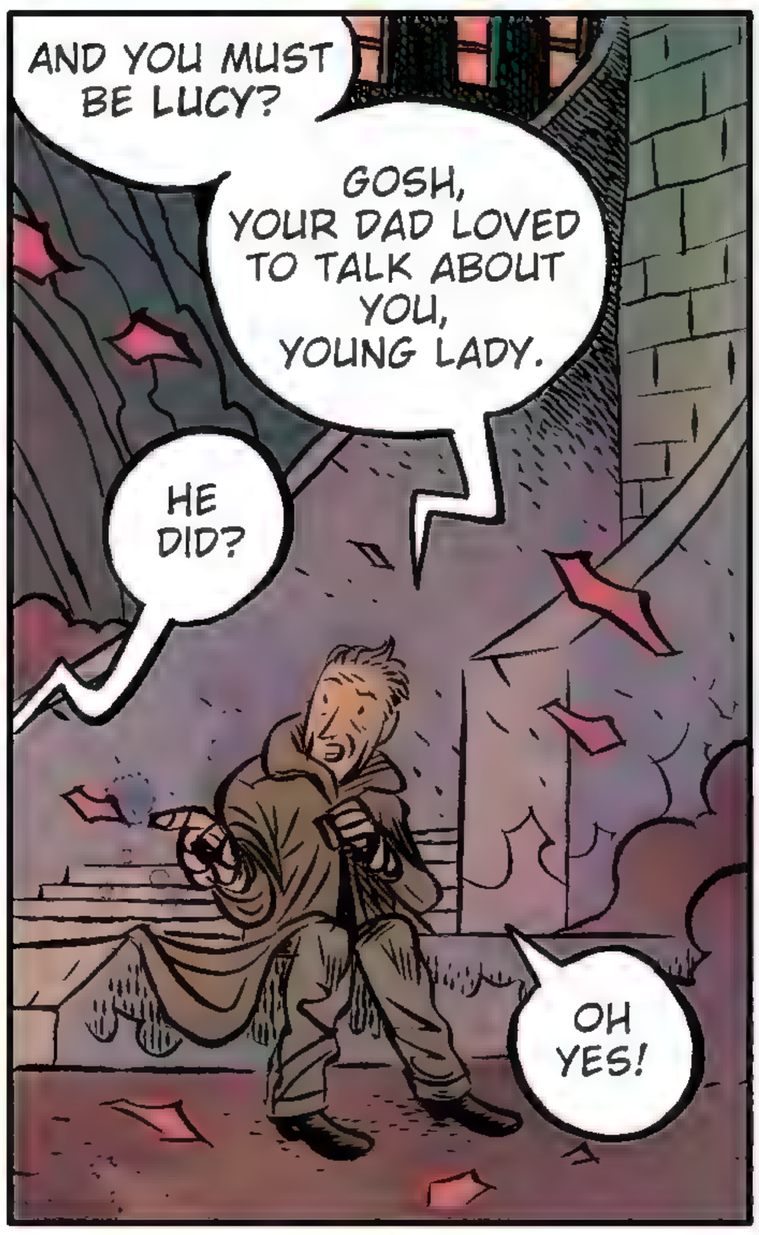
THEY WERE TRUE HEROES, AND TO SAY THEY WILL BE MISSED DOESN'T EVEN BEGIN TO DO IT JUSTICE.

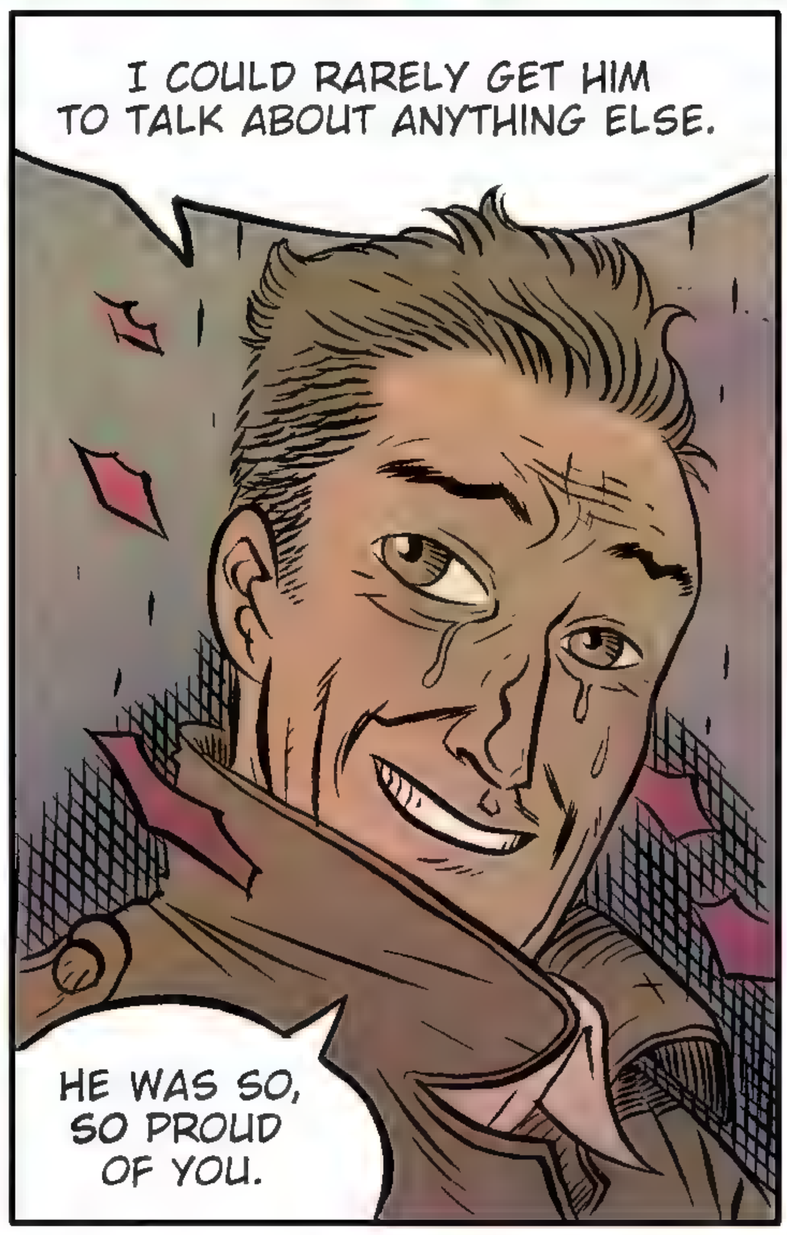


MRS. WEBER?
YES.

I, UH--
--I KNEW YOUR HUSBAND.
YES, OF COURSE.

YOU KNEW DADDY?
YES, LUCY.
DR. ROBINSON AND YOUR FATHER WERE... COLLEAGUES.


AND YOU MUST BE LUCY?
GOSH, YOUR DAD LOVED TO TALK ABOUT YOU, YOUNG LADY.
HE DID?
OH YES!


I COULD RARELY GET HIM TO TALK ABOUT ANYTHING ELSE.
HE WAS SO, SO PROUD OF YOU.

AND YOU MUST BE PROUD OF HIM TOO? ALL HE DID TO SAVE US.

YES--

BUT I MISS HIM.

I--I DON'T WANT HIM TO BE DEAD.

NOR DO I.

BUT HE DID WHAT HE DID SO THAT YOU CAN HAVE THE LIFE HE DREAMED OF FOR YOU, LUCY.

HECK, MAYBE ONE DAY YOU CAN EVEN GROW UP TO BE A HERO LIKE HIM, HUH?

THAT'S ENOUGH!

I'M SORRY, MA'AM, I DIDN'T MEAN TO--

THIS FAMILY HAS HAD **MORE THAN ENOUGH** OF HEROES AND VILLAINS FOR ONE LIFETIME, DOCTOR.

LET'S GO, LUCY!

EIGHT YEARS AGO.

--MY MOM WORKS AT SPIRAL GENERAL HOSPITAL AS A NURSE.

SHE WORKS NIGHTS A LOT.

AND MY DAD HAS THE COOLEST JOB EVER.

HE IS A FIREMAN!

THAT'S PROBABLY WHAT I'M GONNA BE TOO WHEN I GET OLD ENOUGH.

VERY GOOD, EUGENE!

THANK YOU SO MUCH FOR SHARING WITH THE CLASS.

LET'S SEE, WHO'S NEXT...

...LUCY WEBER. READY, LUCY?

UM... YEAH.

WELL, MY MOM'S NAME IS LORRAINE AND SHE WORKS AS A RECEPTIONIST FOR A LAWYER IN THE EAST END. THAT'S NEAR WHERE WE LIVE.

SHE HAS WORKED THERE FOR SEVEN YEARS.

AND WHAT ABOUT YOUR DAD, LUCY?

WELL...

...MY DAD DIED A FEW YEARS AGO.

I KNOW, DEAR, BUT MAYBE YOU COULD TELL US A BIT ABOUT HIM?

WHAT DID HE DO?

MY DAD?

HE WAS--

--HE WAS A COOK.

HOW WAS SCHOOL TODAY, LUCE?

FINE.

FINE?

THAT'S ALL?

WHAT DID YOU DO? ANYTHING EXCITING HAPPEN TODAY?

WHY CAN'T I TELL PEOPLE WHO DADDY REALLY WAS?

WHAT?

LUCY, YOU KNOW WHY.

IF PEOPLE KNEW THAT DAD WAS BLACK HAMMER, THEN--

THEN WHAT?

AREN'T YOU PROUD OF HIM, MOM?

I AM.

HE WAS, LIKE, THE GREATEST HERO EVER!
AND I CAN'T EVEN EVER TELL ANYONE!
IT JUST FEELS LIKE WE'RE LYING!

YOU ARE HIS DAUGHTER.

YOU ALWAYS WILL BE!

JUST BECAUSE YOUR FRIENDS DON'T KNOW THAT DOESN'T MAKE IT ANY LESS TRUE!

I DON'T CARE ABOUT MY FRIENDS KNOWING!
I JUST DON'T WANT PEOPLE TO FORGET HIM!
OR THE OTHER HEROES!

NO ONE IS EVER GOING TO FORGET THEM.

I LOVED YOUR FATHER!

I LOVED WHO HE WAS!

REALLY?!

BECAUSE MOST OF THE TIME YOU JUST ACT LIKE YOU'RE ASHAMED OF WHO HE WAS!

LUCY, JUST THINK ABOUT IT FOR A SECOND!

WHAT IF HIS OLD ENEMIES FOUND OUT AND CAME AFTER YOU?!

WE HAVE TO KEEP IT A SECRET TO KEEP YOU SAFE!

I DON'T WANT TO BE SAFE!
I WANT TO BE BLACK HAMMER'S DAUGHTER!

CLANG

SLAM!

TWO YEARS AGO.

I SEE YOU DO IT TOO?

EXCUSE ME?

THE SKY.

YOU WATCH THE SKY TOO.

LOOKING TO SEE IF THEY'RE UP THERE... IF THEY'RE EVER GOING TO COME BACK.

I DON'T KNOW WHAT YOU'RE TALKING ABOUT.

YES, YOU DO, MS. WEBER.

YOU KNOW DEEP IN YOUR GUT THAT THEY'RE NOT DEAD.

YOU DON'T KNOW WHAT HAPPENED TO THEM... BUT YOU KNOW IT'S NOT OVER.

I DON'T KNOW HOW YOU KNOW WHO I AM, CREEP...

...BUT YOU BETTER GET LOST OR I'M GOING TO CALL THE COPS!

LUCY, WAIT!

IT'S ME, LUCY... JIMMY ROBINSON!

I--I KNEW YOUR DAD, REMEMBER?

DOCTOR STAR! OF COURSE I REMEMBER YOU!

I HAVEN'T BEEN CALLED THAT IN A LONG TIME, LUCY.

I'M SORRY TO APPROACH YOU IN SUCH A CRYPTIC FASHION, BUT I--I NEED TO TALK TO YOU ABOUT SOMETHING VERY IMPORTANT.

CAN WE SIT?

I'M NOT AS YOUNG AS I ONCE WAS.

OF COURSE.

YES, I WATCH THE SKIES TOO, LUCY.

WAITING FOR-- SOMETHING.

YES.

I DON'T KNOW WHAT I'M EXPECTING THOUGH.

IT'S BEEN EIGHT YEARS SINCE THE CATACLYSM.

EIGHT YEARS SINCE THEY DISAPPEARED.

MAYBE THAT'S JUST IT.

MAYBE YOU SHOULD STOP WAITING.

WHAT DO YOU MEAN?

I'VE BEEN KEEPING TABS ON YOU, LUCY.
YOU'RE STARTING AT SPIRAL U NEXT FALL... JOURNALISM SCHOOL.

IF THEY ARE GOING TO BE FOUND, MAYBE IT'S YOU WHO NEED TO START LOOKING.

YES.

AND I HAVE NO PROOF TO SUPPORT THAT.

HECK, I'M A SCIENTIST, SO YOU'D THINK I'D NEED SOME... BUT--

--I DON'T KNOW, CALL IT A GUT FEELING.

I KNOW WHAT YOU MEAN.

IT'S THE SAME FOR ME.

BUT--HOW AM I SUPPOSED TO FIND THEM?

YOU REALLY THINK THEY'RE ALIVE?

LIKE I SAID, I'M ONLY A SCIENTIST.

YOU'RE GOING TO BE THE JOURNALIST.

FLIPP

I DON'T KNOW WHAT PATH YOU NEED TO FOLLOW, LUCY, BUT MAYBE THIS CAN BE A START.

YOUR FATHER AND I BECAME CLOSE. WE SHARED A FEW ADVENTURES TOGETHER BEFORE I RETIRED. AND HE--TRUSTED ME. HE GAVE THIS TO ME IN THE EVENT THAT ANYTHING SHOULD EVER HAPPEN TO HIM.

HE SAID TO GIVE IT TO YOU WHEN YOU WERE OLD ENOUGH. I'D SAY THAT DAY HAS COME.

WHAT IS IT?

RRRRR

I'M NOT SURE...

BUT I'D SAY IT'S A LEAD, REPORTER.

1679-A BELMONT AVE.

WON'T YOU COME WITH ME, DOCTOR STAR?

CALL ME JIMMY, PLEASE.

I'LL BE HERE IF YOU NEED ME, LUCY, BUT MY ADVENTURING DAYS ARE OVER...

NOW IT'S YOUR TURN.

MY TURN.

I SORT OF FEEL LIKE I'VE BEEN WAITING MY WHOLE LIFE TO HEAR THAT.

WAITING FOR SOMEONE ELSE TO ACKNOWLEDGE THAT MY DAD REALLY EXISTED AND THAT I CAN STILL BE A PART OF HIS STORY.

1679

CHK!

I DON'T KNOW WHAT'S MORE SURPRISING, THAT DOCTOR STAR JUST DELIVERED THIS KEY TO ME FROM MY DAD OR THAT HE ACTUALLY BELIEVES THAT DAD AND THE OTHER HEROES ARE STILL ALIVE OUT THERE SOMEWHERE.

BUT NONE OF THAT EVEN BEGAN TO PREPARE ME FOR WHAT I FOUND TODAY...

H-- HELLO?

?

BLEEP!

WEBER DNA MATCH DETECTED.

T-WEEP!

WHOA!!

DEFENSES SHUT DOWN.

CLUNG!!

WELCOME.

T-SSSSKKKKHHKK

WELCOME TO THE HALL OF HAMMER!!

NO WAY!

THE HALL OF HAMMER?!

MY DAD HAD A SECRET HIDEOUT AND HE LEFT THE KEY TO ME!

MY WHOLE LIFE ALL I EVER WANTED WAS TO KNOW MORE ABOUT MY DAD.

THE MICRO-MACHINE CASE#234: ADVENTURE IN THE MINIVERSE

WELL, HERE IT WAS, JUST WAITING FOR ME-- THE UNDISCOVERED WORLD OF BLACK HAMMER.

VENUS FRY-TRI CASE#24 ADVENTURE OF THE BURNING PLANT MEN

JUST BEING HERE I FELT CLOSER TO HIM THAN I HAD SINCE HE DISAPPEARED.

I KNEW I COULDN'T TELL MOM ABOUT THIS PLACE.

VILLAIN FILE! #81

I KNOW SHE MEANS WELL, BUT SHE WOULD NEVER LET ME COME BACK HERE.

THIS PLACE HELD A LOT OF SECRETS.

AND IT HAD TO STAY THAT WAY.

CLICK!

BLEEP!

JUST A LITTLE SECRET BETWEEN ME AND DAD.

HELLO, LUCY.

IF YOU ARE WATCHING THIS, IT MEANS THAT I AM DEAD.

DAD?!

I'M SORRY, SWEETIE.

I WISH I WAS STILL WITH YOU, BUT I MADE MY CHOICE A LONG TIME AGO.

I CHOSE TO BE BLACK HAMMER AND I KNEW THE RISKS THAT WOULD COME WITH THAT.

AND IF YOU'RE IN THE HALL OF HAMMER, IT ALSO MEANS THAT DOCTOR STAR DID WHAT I ASKED AND YOU'RE NOW ALL GROWN UP.

LUCY, THERE IS A VERY IMPORTANT REASON I WANTED DOC TO GIVE YOU THAT KEY. YOU SEE, THIS BASEMENT HEADQUARTERS CONTAINS EVERY MEMENTO, FILE, AND TRACE OF MY LIFE AS BLACK HAMMER.

AND I NEED YOU TO DESTROY IT ALL.

WHAT?!

LUCY, THIS LIFE...BEING BLACK HAMMER...I DON'T WANT IT TO EVER COME BACK ON YOU OR YOUR MOM.

I DON'T WANT ANY TRACE LEFT CONNECTING YOU TWO TO ME.

I DON'T REGRET THE PATH MY LIFE TOOK. I'M PROUD OF WHAT I ACCOMPLISHED IN THIS COSTUME.

I HELPED A LOT OF PEOPLE AND I SAVED A LOT OF LIVES.

BUT...I ALSO MISSED A LOT.

STANDING HERE NOW RECORDING THIS ON THE EQUIPMENT I GOT FROM NEW WORLD, YOU AND YOUR MOM ARE BACK HOME. YOU'RE ONLY SEVEN YEARS OLD NOW. I HAVE NO IDEA HOW OR WHEN I DIE

BUT I DO KNOW THAT I PROBABLY MISSED A LOT OF YOUR LIFE.

I'LL NEVER GET THAT TIME WITH YOU BACK AND NEITHER WILL YOU.

SO, DESTROY EVERYTHING IN THIS PLACE AND LEAVE ME BEHIND.

MOVE ON WITH YOUR OWN LIFE AND DON'T WASTE ANOTHER MINUTE ON ME OR ON BLACK HAMMER.

MY LIFE IS OVER, BUT YOURS IS JUST STARTING, LUCY.

SO GO AND LIVE IT.

GOODBYE, SWEETHEART.

I'LL ALWAYS BE WITH YOU.

beep!

BUT YOU NEED TO LET BLACK HAMMER GO.

"LET BLACK HAMMER GO"?

NO!

I'M SORRY, DADDY, BUT I WON'T DO THAT.

EVER.

THIS PLACE AND EVERYTHING IN IT IS A PART OF YOU.

AND NOW IT'S A PART OF ME.

CHK

BESIDES, I DON'T REALLY THINK I'M GOING AGAINST YOUR LAST WISHES ANYWAY...

...BECAUSE I DON'T REALLY THINK YOU'RE DEAD.

IT'S LIKE DOCTOR STAR SAID... I JUST FEEL IT IN MY GUT. YOU AND THE OTHERS ARE STILL OUT THERE SOMEWHERE AND I'M THE ONE THAT NEEDS TO FIND YOU.

AND NOW I KNOW WHERE TO START.

SO, NO, I WON'T LET YOU GO, DAD.

I'M COMING FOR YOU.

ONE WAY OR ANOTHER...

...I AM GOING TO FIND YOU.

DARK HORSE COMICS®

# BLACK HAMMER

No. 13
$3.99

LEMIRE AFTER JURGENS + BREEDING

SPIRAL CITY BOXING

OPEN

OPEN

CLOSED

FOREIGN ADULT

SHRACK!

MR. SLAMKOWSKI, WHEN WAS THE LAST TIME YOU SAW SHERIFF TRUEHEART?

:SIGH: I ALREADY TOLD YOU, DEPUTY, I HADN'T SEEN HIM IN AT LEAST A WEEK. AND THAT WAS AT THE DINER.

AND YOU WERE AT THE DINER BECAUSE YOU HAVE BEEN SEEING SHERIFF TRUEHEART'S EX-WIFE *TAMMY*, CORRECT?

AND BY "SEEING," MY PARTNER MEANS *ROMANTICALLY.*

I KNOW WHAT HE MEANS! AND YES, I'M SEEING TAMMY. BUT I HAD NOTHING TO DO WITH TRUEHEART GOING MISSING!

YOU'RE WASTING YOUR TIME QUESTIONING ME WHEN YOU SHOULD BE *OUT THERE* LOOKING FOR HIM!

WELL, IT SEEMS TO ME THAT YOU'RE THE ONLY MAN IN THIS TOWN WITH ANY MOTIVE TO HARM SHERIFF TRUEHEART. IN FACT, HE *WARNED* US ABOUT YOU ONLY DAYS BEFORE HE WENT MISSING.

*WARNED* YOU?! *HA!*

LET ME TELL YOU SOMETHING, SONNY... GOOD OL' SHERIFF TRUEHEART WAS IN THE DINER LAST NIGHT AND HE *THREATENED* TAMMY. AND I DO MEAN *THREATENED!* SO MAYBE YOU SHOULD THINK TWICE ABOUT *HIS* CHARACTER.

SO YOU *DID* HAVE A MOTIVE?

JESUS! THIS IS *RIDICULOUS!*

DO YOU HAVE A *LAWYER,* MR. SLAMKOWSKI?

A *LAWYER?!* ARE YOU *CHARGING* ME?!

WELL, THAT REMAINS TO BE--

KZZZT!

SORRY TO INTERRUPT, GENTLEMEN...

*CHRIST!!*

ABRAHAM IS TOTALLY *INNOCENT.* HE IS FREE TO GO.

ABE, YOU ARE TOTALLY INNOCENT.

AND YOU'RE FREE TO GO.

AND YOU'RE SORRY FOR WASTING HIS TIME.

AND WE SURE ARE SORRY TO HAVE WASTED YOUR TIME, SIR.

N-NO PROBLEM.

WHAT THE HELL DO YOU THINK YOU'RE *DOING*, DRAGONFLY?!

ROCKWOOD POLICE

POLICE

:SIGH: WHAT DO YOU THINK? I'M SETTING YOU FREE.

BUT YOU CAN'T JUST *DO* THAT!

ACTUALLY, I CAN DO *WHATEVER I WANT*, ABRAHAM.

:SIGH: LET'S JUST SAIL AWAY, SHERLOCK, AND NEVER COME BACK.

WON'T YOU MISS IT THOUGH, GAIL?

MISS WHAT?

BEING ***GOLDEN GAIL?*** THE ADVENTURE. THE ACTION!

I TOLD YOU: I HAVE EVERYTHING I NEED RIGHT HERE. I'M DONE WITH THAT. ***YOU'RE*** ALL I WANT, SHERLOCK.

I FEEL THE SAME WAY, GAIL.

I...NEVER THOUGHT I'D SAY THIS TO ANYONE, BUT I...I LO--***GAIL?!***

SHERLOCK! WHAT'S HAPP--

SHRACK!

***GAIL!***

OH, HEY GAIL. WHAT'S UP?

THE SUN.

RIGHT.

I THINK I'M GOING TO TAKE A WALK BACK TO THE END OF THE FIELD.

I WANT TO SEE IF MADAME DRAGONFLY IS AROUND. WANNA COME?

WHY IN *THE FUCK* WOULD YOU WANT TO SEE HER?

I'VE BARELY SEEN HER SINCE I GOT HERE. I THOUGHT I MIGHT ASK HER A FEW QUESTIONS.

GOOD LUCK WITH THAT, KID.

ALWAYS A PLEASURE, GAIL.

I can't say I really knew all that much about Madame Dragonfly, even before she and the others disappeared during the Cataclysm.

KNOCK KNOCK

All I know is that she's spooky, and from all accounts very very powerful. No idea what her real name is, or if she ever even had one.

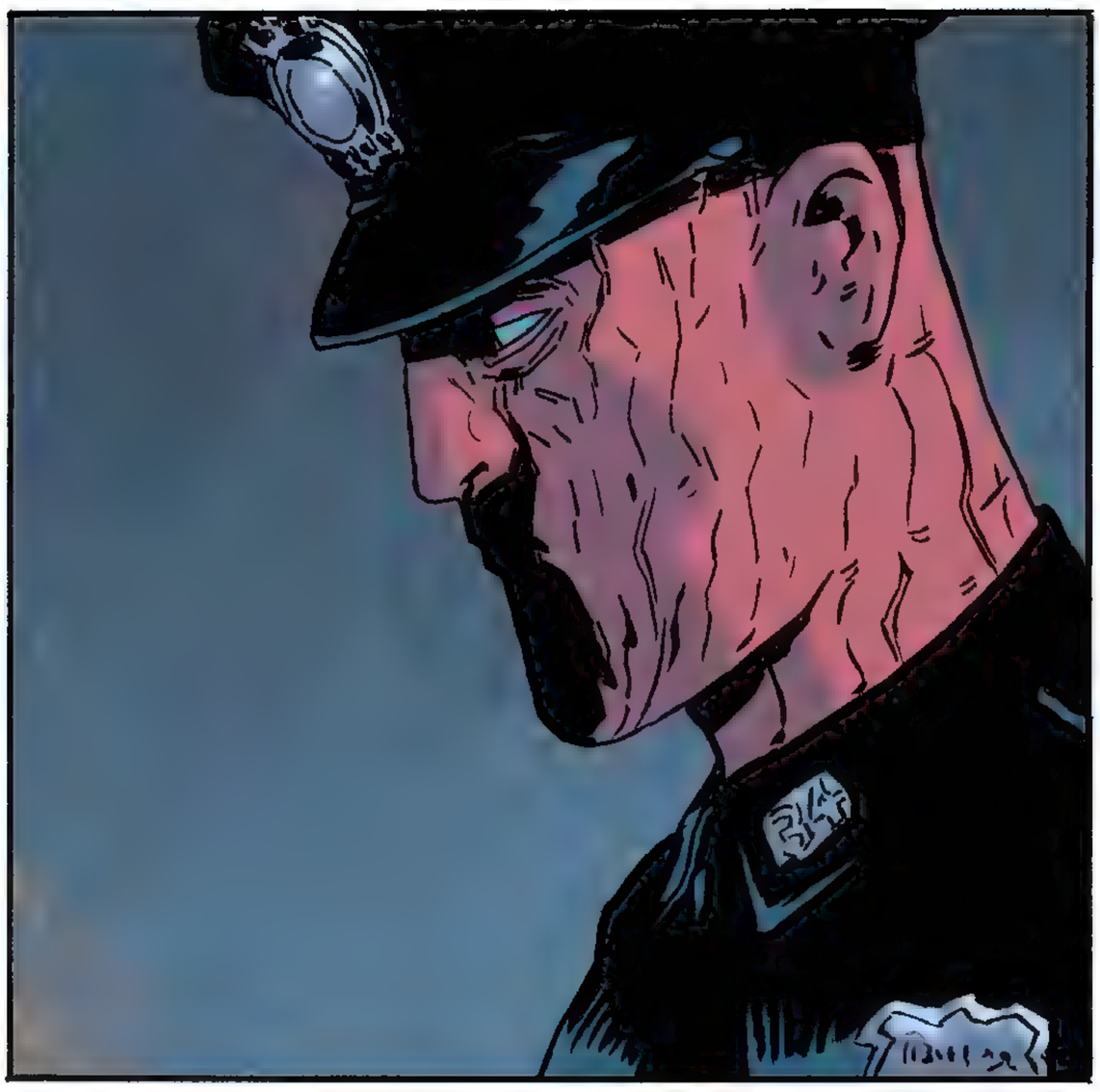
KNOCK KNOCK

The woman is the definition of a mystery...and I do love a mystery.

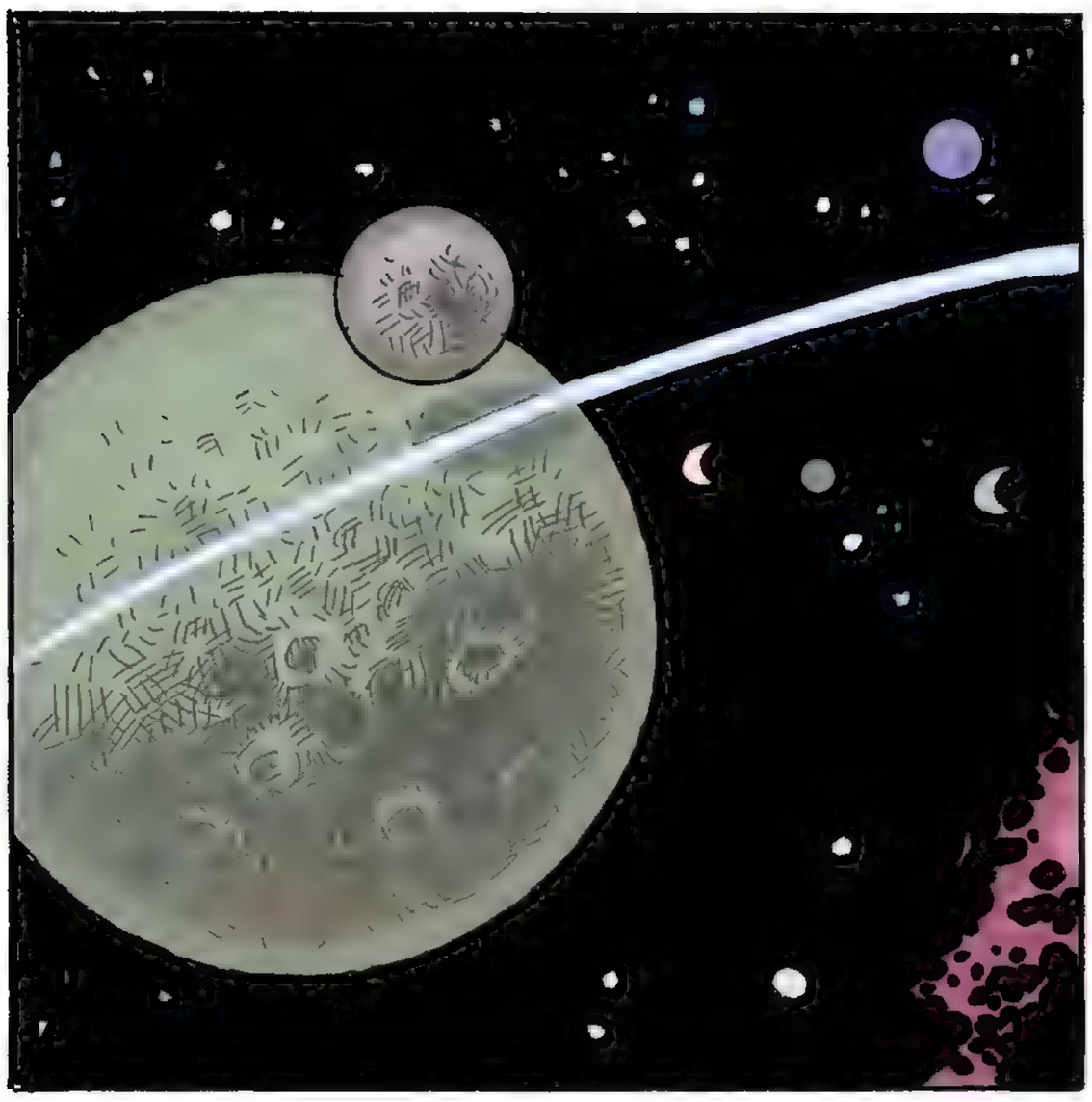
THUMP!

AAH!

Okay...so maybe I don't love all mysteries.



GOODBYE.



SHRACK!

ABE...YOU OKAY?

NOT REALLY. WE NEED TO TALK.

EX

I JUST SPENT TWO HOURS BEING GRILLED BY THOSE DIMWITTED DEPUTIES ABOUT TRUEHEART.

PRIVA

THEY THINK I HAD MOTIVE TO HARM HIM.

WELL, YOU *DID*, ABE.

TAMMY...YOU KNOW I'D NEVER REALLY HURT HIM. NOT LIKE--NOT LIKE *THAT*.

WHAT AM I SUPPOSED TO THINK, ABRAHAM?

YOU STORM OFF, ALL FULL OF PISS AND VINEGAR, AND THEN EARL GOES MISSING!

TAMMY, I WENT OVER TO HIS HOUSE AFTER WE TALKED AND HE NEVER ANSWERED THE DAMN *DOOR*. I DIDN'T EVEN SEE HIM.

LOOK, I KNOW THIS WHOLE THING IS STRANGE, BUT--

"STRANGE"? ABE, MY HUSBAND IS MISSING!

EX-HUSBAND, TAMMY. YOU CAN'T EVEN ***STAND*** HIM.

THAT DOESN'T MEAN I WANT HIM DEAD!

OF COURSE NOT. THAT'S ***NOT*** WHAT I--

TAMMY?

LOOK, I'M SORRY I GOT ANGRY. I'M BEING INSENSITIVE. LET'S JUST-- WHEN DO YOU GET OFF YOUR SHIFT?

LOOK, ABE, MAYBE IT'S BEST IF WE JUST COOL IT FOR A WHILE.

WHAT? TAMMY, ARE YOU SERIOUS? YOU CAN'T REALLY THINK I HAD ANY-THING TO *DO* WITH ALL OF THIS...?

NO-- BUT--

BUT WHAT? I MEAN, I THOUGHT WE WERE--

SO DID I. BUT THIS WHOLE THING WITH EARL...IT'S REALLY MESSED ME UP. I CAN'T THINK STRAIGHT.

...I THINK I JUST NEED TO BE ALONE RIGHT NOW, ABE.

TAMMY, DON'T *DO* THIS. WE CAN GET THROUGH THIS TOGETHER. WHAT-EVER IT IS.

I'LL CALL YOU IN A FEW DAYS. JUST...

...JUST *GO*, OKAY?

SHRACK!

MOONS OF MARS! WHERE AM I?

BARBALIEN!

WONDERFUL. THE GANG'S ALL HERE.

WE'RE ON *NEW WORLD*, BARBIE. WE ALL GOT *ZAPPED* HERE JUST LIKE YOU.

BUT WHY?

OKAY, STARLOK, WHAT *GIVES?!* WHY HAVE YOU GATHERED US ALL HERE?

I AM SORRY TO HAVE SUMMONED YOU SO HASTILY, ABRAHAM SLAM. AND I'M SORRY FOR TAKING THE LIBERTY OF PUTTING YOU ALL BACK INTO YOUR COSTUMES AS WELL, BUT I THINK YOU ARE GOING TO *NEED THEM.*

LOOK, PAL, I'M RETIRED. WHATEVER IT IS, I'M OUT. SEND ME BACK HOME. *NOW.*

JUST HOLD ON, GOLDEN GAIL. WAIT UNTIL YOU HEAR WHAT STARLOK HAS TO SAY.

VERY WELL, BLACK HAMMER. *GET ON WITH IT* THEN, STARLOK.

A GREAT EVIL HAS ARISEN. THE *BALANCE* HAS BEEN UPSET. MY DARK COUNTERPART, *ANTI-GOD*, IS FREE AND *YOU* ARE ALL THAT STANDS IN HIS WAY.

It is true. I have seen his dark mass moving through the cosmos. Anti-God IS coming.

WHAT ABOUT YOUR USUAL COSMIC CREW, STARLOK? THE LIGHT RIDERS? WHY CAN'T *THEY* KEEP ANTI-GOD IN CHECK LIKE THEY ALWAYS HAVE?

I--I GOTTA SAY, I AGREE WITH GOLDEN GAIL. AFTER MY RECENT... FAILURES, I'VE HUNG UP THE MASK, TOO. SURELY THERE ARE BETTER CANDIDATES TO DEAL WITH THIS?

YOU DON'T UNDERSTAND, ABRAHAM. WE ARE *ALL THAT'S LEFT!*

"THE GOLDEN FAMILY, Y-FORCE, AND THE LIGHT RIDERS ARE ALL ***DEAD***. ANTI-GOD HAS KILLED THEM!"

NO!

I AM SORRY, GAIL. BUT NOW YOU SEE WHAT WE FACE.

"EVEN NOW, THE SKIES ABOVE SPIRAL CITY ARE OPENING. ANTI-GOD IS ALMOST *HERE!*"

I KNOW WHAT YOU'RE BEING ASKED TO DO IS HARD. MY WIFE AND DAUGHTER ARE IN SPIRAL CITY. I'D LOVE NOTHING MORE THAN TO BE ABLE TO GO HOME TO THEM RIGHT NOW. BUT WE *CAN'T.*

IT MAY WELL BE SUICIDE, BUT WE HAVE NO CHOICE. WE *HAVE* TO *MAKE A STAND.*

BUT...WHAT CAN *I* DO AGAINST A THREAT LIKE THIS? I CAN BARELY TAKE DOWN A COUPLE OF STREET PUNKS ANYMORE.

WELL, *I'M* NOT GOING IF YOU'RE NOT, ABE. US OLD-TIMERS HAVE TO STICK TOGETHER.

SHE'S RIGHT. YOU'RE OUR *HEART.* YOU'VE ALWAYS BEEN OUR HEART, ABE.

THE WORLD IS DEPENDING ON US. WE *NEED YOU,* ABE.

:AHEM: RIGHT. OKAY, THEN. WHAT ARE WE STANDING AROUND FOR? THERE'S ***WORK*** TO BE DONE!

THAT'S MORE LIKE IT.

HELL, WE MAY ***DIE*** DOWN THERE, BUT AT LEAST WE'LL DIE ***TOGETHER.*** RIGHT?

RIGHT.

RIGHT.

Yes. Together.

COME ON, GOTH QUEEN. JOIN IN OR ***GO HOME.***

...

FINE.

TOGETHER. ***NO MATTER WHAT.***

They have all given up.

And the worst part is, I can already see why. I mean, where else can I look for answers? There is nowhere else. Only here.

You know, it could almost be peaceful here if it wasn't so damn claustrophobic.

Maybe I'm the foolish one. Maybe I'm going through the same motions they all did when they first arrived. Maybe they already know better. Know that it's useless.

Dad didn't have to live through this, at least. He was never like me in that way. He didn't ask questions...he didn't overthink things. He just acted. He did what needed to be done.

I don't even know why I'm writing this. There's no newspaper I can publish it in. No net to upload it to. I guess...

I guess I'm writing to you, Dad.

Then a crazy idea hits me.

It's not that I'm talking to you, Dad...it's almost like you're talking to me.

And your voice...your voice is like a drum... and I realize it's coming from the hammer!

It's almost time.

You're calling me. Telling me it's time.

"TIME"? TIME FOR WHAT, COLONEL?

The Event, Abraham...the moment that ALL OF THIS has been built around.

BISC

DADDY?

KRA-KOOM!!

THE HELL WAS THAT?

SOMETHING-- SOMETHING ISN'T RIGHT.

MOONS OF MARS! IS THAT--?

LUCY?!

NO, ABRAHAM. I'M THE *BLACK HAMMER*...

...AND I REMEMBER *EVERYTHING.*

TO BE CONTINUED!

MORNING, COLONEL.

:AHEM: I SAID, GOOD MORNING, COLONEL.

Is it?

BAHHHHH

I THINK SO.

Oh. I had not noticed.

UM, EXCUSE ME.

You are excused.

WELL, YOU'RE NOT! I WAS DRINKING HERE! YOU CAN'T JUST SNEAK UP ON SOMEONE AND FLOAT OVER THEM WHEN THEY'RE GETTING THEIR BUZZ ON!

I am sorry, Gail. I was distracted.

WHAT'S NEW?

That is.

WHAT IS? I DON'T SEE ANYTHING.

No. You cannot. It is in the Para-Zone.

I think...I think I just saw an *entity* born into the Para-Zone.

BORN? WHAT, YOU MEAN OTHER THINGS ACTUALLY *LIVE* IN THAT PLACE? HOW COME OTHER THINGS CAN GO INTO THE PARA-ZONE, BUT WE CAN'T?

I cannot answer that. The Para-Zone is a dimension of great mystery. Most of it is far beyond my comprehension.

But this new entity...I cannot help but think I have seen it before.

Yes...I do believe I have. Curious.

HEY! YOU CAN'T JUST LEAVE!

HUMPH! WHAT A WEIRDO.

WHAT ARE *YOU* LOOKING AT, CREEPELLA?

Ah, there you are. Yes...I have seen you before. I know it. But I can't quite remember where.

So many things slip my mind these days.

--AND THERE'S ANOTHER DEVASTATING LEFT HOOK! THE CHAMP IS IN DEEP TROUBLE NOW!

AND THERE'S ANOTHER DEVASTATING LEFT HOOK! THE CHAMP IS IN DEEP TROUBLE NOW!

THWAP

AND NOW THE CONTENDER, THIS YOUNG UPSTART FROM SPIRAL CITY, ABE SLAMKOWSKI, *REALLY* HAS THE REIGNING MIDDLEWEIGHT CHAMP JOE LAWSON ON THE ROPES!

THIS LAWSON SURE IS ONE TOUGH COOKIE! I JUST NEED TO HOLD ON A BIT LONGER! IF I CAN *WIN* THIS MATCH IT WILL REALLY PUT MY BOXING GYM ON THE MAP!

OOF

SHRACK

NOW, WAIT A MINUTE, SOMETHING SEEMS TO BE HAPPENING HERE. SOME KIND OF FLASH OF LIGHT. I--I HAVE NO IDEA *WHAT* I'M SEEING HERE, FOLKS! I DON'T KNOW HOW TO EVEN *BEGIN* TO DESCRIBE IT!

WHAT THE BLAZES IS *THAT*?!

--GAK!

THAT--THAT *THING* HAS ATTACHED ITSELF TO POOR JOE LAWSON'S FACE!

SHRACK

:UNGH!:

CRIPES! THAT THING SEEMS TO HAVE TAKEN CONTROL OF LAWSON, AND BOY DOES IT PACK A PUNCH!

WHAT-EVER IT IS, IT'S TURNED THE CHAMP INTO A MONSTER! I HAVE TO DO SOMETHING AND QUICK!

MOMENTS LATER...

LUCKILY I WAS ABLE TO SLIP AWAY IN ALL THE PANIC. AND EVEN MORE FORTUNATE, I REMEMBERED TO BRING MY ABRAHAM SLAM COSTUME WITH ME TO THE FIGHT...JUST IN CASE!

I'M WORRIED THE PEOPLE OUT THERE MIGHT RECOGNIZE ABE SLAMKOWSKI AND ABRAHAM SLAM ARE THE SAME PERSON...BUT MY TRUSTY MASK SHOULD BE ENOUGH TO THROW THEM OFF MY SCENT!

RAARRRGHH!!

IT'S TOTAL PANDEMONIUM HERE, FOLKS! THE SPIRAL POLICE HAVE ARRIVED, BUT THEY ARE HAVING NO LUCK CONTAINING THE CHAMP, JOE LAWSON--

--WHO SEEMS TO BE UNDER THE CONTROL OF SOME STRANGE ENTITY!

SORRY ABOUT THIS, CHAMP...

GRRR?

NOW WAIT A MINUTE! WHAT'S THIS? COULD IT BE?! DO WE HAVE A NEW CHALLENGER?

THWAP

OH BOY! WHAT A *TREAT*, FOLKS! IT'S SPIRAL CITY'S VERY OWN COSTUMED CRIME BUSTER... **ABRAHAM SLAM!!**

WHAT AN UPPERCUT! BUT THE CHAMP IS GETTING UP!

UH-OH. I THINK I MAY HAVE JUST MADE HIM ANGRIER--

SHRACK!

--OOF!

BETTER THINK QUICKLY, ABE! THIS IS MORE THAN JUST A BOXING MATCH TO ***WHATEVER*** THAT THING IS THAT'S POSSESSING LAWSON!

*OUCH!* AND ABRAHAM SLAM COUNTERS WITH A HEAVY BODY SHOT!

SORRY, CHAMP, I KNOW THAT WAS A BIT OF A LOW BLOW.

WHAM...

...BAM...

YOU'RE ABOUT TO GET *SLAMMED!*

WOWIE ZOWIE! WHAT A *PUNCH!*

WHATEVER THAT THING WAS, I THINK I SCARED IT OFF.

AND DON'T LOOK NOW, FOLKS, BUT *LAWSON* IS *DOWN AND OUT!*

THAT MEANS WE HAVE OURSELVES *A NEW CHAMP!* THAT'S RIGHT, ABRAHAM SLAM IS THE NEW MIDDLEWEIGHT CHAMPION OF SPIRAL CITY!

AS NICE AS IT IS TO BE THE CHAMP, I CAN'T HELP BUT FEEL LIKE I HAVEN'T SEEN THE LAST OF THAT STRANGE CREATURE.

--THE NEW MIDDLEWEIGHT CHAMPION OF SPIRAL CITY!

SHRACK

So odd. Had Abraham told me about this entity? Perhaps he did.

There are so many things people tell me. Sometimes I hear them. Sometimes they are like echoes. Echoes upon echoes. And it's hard for me to decide which ones to focus on.

The creature's movements. Like a pattern. All part of the structure of things. I feel powerless to change its course...All I can do is follow.

OH, REX, ARE YOU **SURE** YOU SHOULD DO THIS? IT SEEMS SO DANGEROUS!

I **HAVE** TO, GAIL, BABY. THESE JOCKS CAN'T JUST COME TO SPIRAL CITY AND ACT LIKE THEY **OWN** THE ROADS.

OH, REX, ARE YOU ***SURE*** YOU SHOULD DO THIS? IT SEEMS SO DANGEROUS!

I ***HAVE*** TO, GAIL, BABY. THESE JOCKS CAN'T JUST COME TO SPIRAL CITY AND ACT LIKE THEY ***OWN*** THE ROADS!

GOOD OL' ***REX PACER*** IS GONNA SHOW THEM THAT SPIRAL CITY BELONGS TO US!

BIG TALK, REX. I THINK YOUR ***GIRLFRIEND*** MIGHT HAVE A BETTER CHANCE AGAINST ME THAN ***YOU.***

YOU HAVE NO IDEA, DIRK ATWOOD! ALL I WOULD HAVE TO DO IS SAY MY ***MAGIC WORD*** AND WHAM! ***GOLDEN GAIL*** WOULD WIPE THAT SMILE OFF YOUR FACE.

BUT THE ***LAST*** THING I WANT IS FOR REX PACER TO SEE HIS GIRL GAIL IS ***REALLY*** JUST A ***LITTLE KID*** WHEN SHE BECOMES GOLDEN GAIL!

WISH ME LUCK, BABY.

GO GET 'EM, TIGER.

VROOOOOOM! VROOOOM!

ALL RIGHT, ON MY MARK! GET READY...

GO!

SKREEECCCHHH!

WAIT! WHAT'S THAT WEIRD GLOWING THING? WHATEVER IT IS, IT'S RIGHT IN THEIR PATH!

SHRACK

SPLURCH

WHAT THE BLUE BLAZES IS THAT?!

WHOA! STOP!

GRRRRR!!

KRASH!

REX!!

WHATEVER'S GOING ON, I CAN'T DO ANYTHING TO HELP REX LIKE THIS.

LIKE IT OR NOT, I NEED TO BECOME GOLDEN GAIL!

ZAFRAM!

KRA-KOOM!

WHATEVER YOU ARE, YOU'RE **NOT** DIRK ATWOOD. HE MAY BE A **CREEP**, BUT HE'S NOT A **MONSTER**.

GRRR.

**SHRACK!**

:UNGH!:

OKAY, THAT **ALMOST** HURT.

BUT IF REX IS INJURED, I'M GOING TO DO A LOT **MORE** THAN JUST HURT **YOU!**

COME ON, YOU...**GET OFF!**

***UGH!*** SO GROSS. WHAT **IS** THIS THING, ANYWAY?

WHATEVER IT IS, IT'S GETTING AWAY! I SHOULD CHASE AFTER IT BUT...

REX?!

OH, REX, BABY...PLEASE HOLD ON!

WHO--?

IT'S ME, REX. IT'S *GAIL.*

HE--HE'S ***DEAD.*** MY FIRST TRUE LOVE...GONE FOREVER. I DON'T FEEL "GOLDEN" AT ALL.

I FEEL LIKE I'VE BEEN CURSED SINCE THAT OLD WIZARD ***GAVE*** ME THE MAGIC WORD!

IT'S ME, REX. IT'S GAIL.

Poor Gail.

Perhaps I should destroy it? It seems to only cause pain. Yet, the moment my ray gun takes aim, I know that this is not right.

This is not the way it's supposed to happen, is it?

I do not destroy it. At least not yet...

There is more to this story. Things that happened. Things I am powerless to change.

IT WAS THE MIDDLE OF THE SUMMER AND SPIRAL CITY WAS ON THE VERGE OF BOILING OVER. I HADN'T HAD A SINGLE CASE IN WEEKS AND I WAS STARTING TO QUESTION MY DECISION TO QUIT THE SPIRAL PD TWO MONTHS EARLIER.

MARK MARKS
PRIVATE DETECTIVE

I HAD MY REASONS FOR QUITTING THE FORCE, BUT I WAS STARTING TO WONDER IF I'D MADE A MISTAKE. MAYBE NOBODY IN THIS STINKING TOWN WANTED A WASHED-UP PRIVATE EYE...ESPECIALLY ONE THAT'S ***SECRETLY FROM MARS.***

AND THEN, JUST LIKE THAT, A TALL DRINK OF WATER CAME WALTZING INTO MY OFFICE... AND CHANGED EVERYTHING.

UM, SORRY. THE DOOR WAS UNLOCKED. I'M LOOKING TO HIRE A DETECTIVE, BUT IF THIS IS A BAD TIME...

UH, YEAH. I MEAN, NO, IT'S NOT A BAD TIME. WHAT CAN I DO FOR YA, MISTER?

ACTUALLY, IT'S ABOUT MY WIFE. IT'S-- IT'S A DELICATE SITUATION, ACTUALLY. A LITTLE EMBARRASSING.

AH, LET ME GUESS. YOU THINK THE LITTLE LADY IS RUNNING AROUND ON YA AND YOU WANT ME TO FOLLOW HER AND SNAP A FEW PHOTOS. IT'S MORE COMMON THAN YOU THINK. NOTHING TO BE EMBARRASSED ABOUT, MISTER...?

BROOKES. PETER BROOKES. AND YOU MISUNDERSTAND. IT'S NOT THAT...

YOU SEE, IT WAS *ME* WHO HAD THE AFFAIR. SHE WALKED IN ON ME, AND...

...AND, WELL, THIS AFFAIR I WAS HAVING, IT WASN'T OF THE *USUAL* SORT, IF YOU CATCH MY DRIFT, MR. MARKS? IT WAS WITH ANOTHER-- UM...

OH! AHEM YES. I THINK I UNDERSTAND, MR. BROOKES.

AT ANY RATE, SHE'S MISSING. AT FIRST I THOUGHT SHE WAS DISGUSTED BY WHAT SHE SAW AND RAN OFF. BUT IT'S BEEN A WEEK NOW. AND THERE WERE *THE SCRATCHES.*

SCRATCHES? WHAT DO YOU MEAN?

IN THE HALLWAY NEAR OUR DOOR. I FOUND SOME SCRATCHES ON THE WALLS AND DOOR FRAME. I SHOULD HAVE CALLED THE POLICE, BUT GIVEN THE, UM, DELICATE NATURE OF THE SITUATION...

...I THOUGHT MAYBE SOMEONE *LIKE YOU* WOULD BE MORE DISCREET.

SOMEONE LIKE *ME?*

A PRIVATE INVESTIGATOR.

OH, YES. OF COURSE.

YOU MUST BE USED TO ALL SORTS OF SORDID THINGS IN YOUR LINE OF WORK, MR. MARKS? BUT IF THIS IS TOO MUCH FOR YOU TO HANDLE, MAYBE I CAN--

NO, NO. PLEASE. I'LL TAKE THE CASE, MR. BROOKES. THIS IS, UH, *RIGHT UP MY ALLEY,* ACTUALLY.

EXCELLENT. SO, WILL YOU START RIGHT AWAY?

YES. I'LL NEED TO SEE YOUR HOUSE. THE SCRATCHES. AND THEN THERE'S THE MATTER OF MY FEE.

MONEY IS NO OBJECT. JUST FIND HER, MR. MARKS. WE MAY NOT HAVE A...*CONVENTIONAL* MARRIAGE, BUT I DO LOVE HER, IN MY WAY. PLEASE, JUST FIND HER.

SO I START AT THE SCENE OF THE CRIME. THE HUMIDITY IN SPIRAL TONIGHT HAS ME LONGING FOR THE DRY AIR OF MARS. I FEEL LIKE I'M SWIMMING THROUGH GLUE. BUT IT'S GOOD TO BE OUT OF THE OFFICE FOR A CHANGE.

NO DOUBT ABOUT IT, THERE WAS A STRUGGLE HERE. BUT THE STRANGEST PART OF ALL... THESE SCRATCHES DON'T LOOK LIKE THEY WERE MADE BY ***HUMAN FINGERS.***

IN FACT, THIS WHOLE THING IS STARTING TO GIVE ME THE CHILLS. SOMETHING ISN'T RIGHT HERE AND I NEED TO GET TO THE BOTTOM OF IT FAST.

LUCKILY I HAVE A FEW ADVANTAGES THAT NORMAL P.I.'S DON'T...INCLUDING MY INHERENT MARTIAN SIXTH SENSE. OR AS I LIKE TO CALL IT, MY "BARBADAR."

WHATEVER TOOK MRS. BROOKES ISN'T FAR FROM HERE. IT LEFT AN INVISIBLE ECTOPLASMIC TRAIL I COULD FOLLOW IN MY SLEEP.

I DON'T NEED MY BARBADAR TO KNOW I'VE FOUND MY PREY. THIS PLACE STINKS OF SOMETHING ***NOT OF THIS WORLD.***

I START TO THINK THAT MAYBE THIS IS A JOB FOR BARBALIEN, NOT MARK MARKS, WHEN I GET BLINDSIDED...

AND WHAT I SEE NEXT PRETTY MUCH MAKES MY MIND UP FOR ME.

UH-OH.

***MRS. BROOKES,*** I PRESUME?

GRRRR...

JUST STAND STILL, MA'AM. I'M HERE TO HELP.

WHATEVER THAT ENTITY IS THAT'S ATTACHED ITSELF TO HER, IT'S MADE HER EXTRA QUICK.

LET ME GET THAT ***THING*** OFF YOUR--:OOF!:

AND EXTRA STRONG.

--UNGH!

I'M HOLDING BACK. CAN'T HELP MYSELF. ALL I SEE IS POOR MRS. BROOKES ***TRAPPED*** UNDER THAT THING.

SKREEEEE!!

THAT'S MY MISTAKE...I'M NOT FIGHTING MRS. BROOKES, I'M FIGHTING THAT THING. AND IT'S TIME I SHOWED IT WHAT BARBALIEN CAN ***REALLY DO!*** A BLAST OF MY ***MARTIAN VISION*** SHOULD DO THE TRICK!

IT'S ON THE RUN!

NOT SO FAST!

GAH!

I NEVER FELT PAIN LIKE THAT BEFORE. WHATEVER IS ON THE OTHER SIDE OF THAT PORTAL IS MORE POWERFUL THAN ANYTHING I'VE EVER ENCOUNTERED!

WH-WHAT KIND OF *MONSTER* ARE *YOU*?!

I'M HERE TO HELP YOU, BUT--

MARTHA!

PETER?

GET AWAY FROM HER!

NO TIME TO EXPLAIN. AND HOW CAN I BLAME HIM FOR THINKING *I'M* THE MONSTER? MAYBE THAT'S ALL THIS CITY IS REALLY FULL OF... NOT PEOPLE AT ALL, BUT DIFFERENT KINDS OF MONSTERS.

-PTING-

MRS. BROOKES THOUGHT HER *HUSBAND* WAS A MONSTER BECAUSE OF WHOM HE LOVED. AND THEN THERE'S ME...I HAVE SO MANY SECRETS. THEY'D FORM A MOB IF THEY *REALLY* KNEW.

BLAM!

NO! YOU DON'T UNDERSTAND!

SO I RUN. I LET THE NIGHT SWALLOW ME UP. I LET THE HEAT AND THE SHADOW TAKE HOLD AND SLIP AWAY. MAYBE *ONE* DAY I'LL STAY HIDDEN, AND I WON'T COME BACK *AT ALL*.

NO! YOU DON'T UNDERSTAND!

SHRACK

It seems to be moving faster now. Harder and harder for me to keep up...and to keep past and present straight. Almost too much to think about.

HELLO, THERE. I SEE YOU'VE COME TO TAKE ANOTHER GLIMPSE INTO THE DARKEST CORNERS OF YOUR **SOUL.**

YOU'VE COME TO TAKE *ANOTHER GLIMPSE* INTO THE DARKEST CORNERS OF MY *CABIN OF HORRORS?*

VERY WELL, THOUGH I MUST WARN YOU...I CANNOT CONTROL ALL THE THINGS THAT *CREEP* AND *CRAWL* WITHIN THESE CURSED WALLS. YOU SEE, I AM MERELY THE *CUSTODIAN* OF THE DAMNED DOMAIN.

BUT I SEE YOU ARE BRAVE. YOU DO NOT *FLEE.* ONLY TIME WILL TELL IF YOUR DECISION IS WISE OR FOOLHARDY.

SO THEN, LET US *BEGIN,* SHALL W--

KNOCK KNOCK

NOW, WHO THE *HELL IS THAT?*

KNOCK KNOCK

KNOCK KNOCK

OH, WOULD YOU HOLD YOUR BLOODY HORSES ALREADY? *I'M COMING! I WAS IN THE MIDDLE OF A STORY!*

MADAME DRAGONFLY?

YES.

WE NEED YOUR *HELP!*

:SIGH: I TOLD YOU, ABRAHAM. WE CAN FIGURE THIS OUT WITHOUT *HER*.

BE NICE, GAIL.

THIS *IS* ME BEING NICE.

I CAN'T IMAGINE WHAT THE LIKES OF *YOU ALL* WOULD WANT WITH *ME*?

IT'S NOT US WHO NEEDS YOU, MADAME...

...*BLACK HAMMER* IS IN TROUBLE!

WHAT THE *BLAZES* IS ON HIS FACE?

WE'RE NOT EXACTLY SURE. WE'VE ALL FACED IT AT ONE TIME OR ANOTHER IN THE PAST, AND IT ESCAPED EACH TIME. WE FOUND JOSEPH--BLACK HAMMER--LIKE THIS. IT SEEMED HE HAD HAD A GREAT BATTLE WITH IT IN DOWNTOWN SPIRAL BEFORE SUCCUMBING.

WELL...WE CAN'T LEAVE HIM OUT THERE. BRING HIM IN.

DO I *HAVE* TO GO INSIDE?

GAIL!

HSSSSSS!!

YOU SAID YOU'VE ALL FACED THIS THING BEFORE. DID IT...ATTACH ITSELF TO YOU, TOO?

NO, OTHER PEOPLE. IT CONTROLLED THEM, GAVE THEM POWERS AND TURNED THEM INTO *MANIACS.*

WE CAN ONLY GUESS THAT JOSEPH'S STRENGTH IS KEEPING IT FROM CONTROLLING *HIM,* TOO.

THE STRUGGLE BETWEEN HIM AND THIS ENTITY SEEMS TO HAVE PUT THEM BOTH INTO A COMA OF SORTS.

WELL, IT'S ***NOT*** MAGICAL IN NATURE. HOW DID YOU GET THE PARASITE OFF THE OTHER VICTIMS?

I ***RIPPED*** IT OFF. SO DID BARBIE. AND ABE PUNCHED IT OFF. BUT NONE OF THAT IS WORKING THIS TIME.

"PUNCHED" IT OFF? HOW ***CLEVER*** OF YOU ALL.

WHY DON'T YOU ***WATCH*** THAT SASS ***MOUTH*** OF YOURS, ***WITCH LADY?***

WHY DON'T YOU TRY AND MAKE ME, ***LITTLE*** GIRL?

LADIES, LADIES, ***PLEASE!*** WE NEED TO THINK ABOUT JOSEPH. WE CAN'T ***LEAVE*** HIM LIKE THIS. HE HAS A LITTLE GIRL OF HIS OWN BACK HOME!

LOOK, MADAME DRAGONFLY, WE ARE ***REALLY*** SORRY TO BARGE IN ON YOU LIKE THIS, BUT WE'VE TRIED EVERY-THING ELSE AND, WELL, I THINK WE NEED TO TRY ***MAGIC.*** AND THEY SAY YOU'RE THE ONE TO TALK TO WHEN IT COMES TO HOCUS-POCUS IN SPIRAL CITY.

OH, I SEE HOW IT IS. NONE OF YOU COSTUMED "CHAMPIONS" HAS THE TIME OF DAY FOR ME UNTIL YOU ***NEED*** SOMETHING.

THEN YOU COME HERE WITH YOUR ***CAPES BETWEEN YOUR LEGS.***

WHAT IS ***THAT*** SUPPOSED TO MEAN?!

OH, DON'T ACT ALL INNOCENT...

"DON'T THINK I DIDN'T SEE YOUR ***LITTLE MEETING*** LAST YEAR WHEN YOU WERE THINKING OF FORMING ***YOUR OWN TEAM.***

"I CAN'T HELP BUT NOTICE YOU HAD NO INTEREST IN INVITING ME TO ***THAT,*** BUT ***NOW*** WHEN YOU NEED ***MAGIC,*** WELL..."

HERO SQUAD DELTA
JUSTICE BUREAU OF
~~THE X-TORCERS~~
CHAMPIONS OF SPIR
~~ALL-STAR SPIRALS~~
LEGION OF CHAMPION
TITANS OF JUSTICE

I'M REAL SORRY, MADAME D. HONESTLY, THAT WHOLE SUPERTEAM IDEA WENT NOWHERE. AND BESIDES, I JUST DIDN'T THINK SOMEONE LIKE YOU WOULD EVEN ***WANT*** TO BE INVITED.

I DIDN'T. IT'S THE THOUGHT THAT COUNTS.

OH, WOULD YOU GIVE ME A BREAK WITH THE ***WOE IS ME*** BULLSHIT?

HE COULD BE ***DYING!*** ARE YOU GOING TO HELP US OR NOT, LADY?!

:SIGH: FINE.

--THE HELL AM I?

EASY, BIG GUY. WE'RE IN THE WITCH'S COTTAGE. BUT WE'LL GET YOU OUT OF HERE AND BACK TO ***NORMAL LAND*** ASAP.

A SIMPLE ***EXILE*** SPELL WILL SEND THE THING BACK TO WHEREVER IT CAME FROM.

MADAME DRAGONFLY? ARE YOU ALL RIGHT?

I--YES. IT'S JUST THAT-- THE PORTAL. FOR A MOMENT I SAW ***INSIDE*** OF IT AND--

AND?

AND NOTHING! YOU ALL NEED TO LEAVE. NOW.

BUT--

I SAID ***NOW!*** NO GOOD CAN COME FROM ALL OF US BEING TOGETHER LIKE THIS!

NO GOOD CAN COME FROM ALL OF US BEING TOGETHER LIKE THIS!

OH!

SHRACK

And then I remember. My mind clears. My thoughts coalesce.

I know where I have seen this before. I know what happens *next.*

It would be so easy to let it go...and if I did, maybe everything would be different? Maybe all of their lives would be better?

All I have to do is *nothing.* If I don't act...if I *just watch,* it will all change.

TALKY-WALKY, HOW LONG BEFORE WE'RE DUE BACK AT THE SPACE STATION?

WE STILL HAVE FIVE HOURS, COLONEL. PLENTY OF TIME TO COLLECT ROCK AND VEGETATION SAMPLES FROM THIS STRANGE MOON AND MAKE IT BACK.

***ACES!*** IN THAT CASE, I THINK I'M GOING TO DO A LITTLE EXPLORING. THOSE MOUNTAIN RANGES LOOK SO ODD. I'D LIKE TO GET A CLOSER LOOK. DO YOU MIND STAYING WITH THE SHIP IN CASE ***NASA*** CALLS?

*SIGH* COLONEL, EVERY TIME YOU GO OFF EXPLORING ON YOUR OWN IT LEADS TO TROUBLE.

YOU CALL IT TROUBLE, TALKY...I CALL IT ***ADVENTURE!*** I'LL BE BACK IN A JIFF!

TALKY-WALKY REALLY IS A SWEET OLD RUST BUCKET, BUT SHE WORRIES TOO MUCH. THERE'S NOTHING ON THIS ROCK TO WORRY ABOUT.

TRUTH IS, I COULD USE SOME ADVENTURE RIGHT ABOUT NOW.

SINCE TALKY AND I BROKE UP THAT RING OF ALIEN SLAVE TRADERS LAST MONTH OUR MISSIONS HAVE BEEN PRETTY DULL.

SKREEEEEE!!

WHAT--?!

KA-ZAK!

WHO--?

Y-YOU'RE ME!

And you were me.

I DON'T UNDERSTAND?

Neither do I...most of the time.

WHERE DID YOU COME FROM? IS THIS SOME SORT OF TIME-TRAVEL THING?

Sort of. Not really...It's complicated. A pattern. Very complex.

THIS IS PRETTY FAR OUT. I--THERE'S SO MUCH I WANT TO ASK YOU. I MEAN...NO OFFENSE, BUT ***WHAT HAPPENED*** TO US? YOU DON'T LOOK SO HOT.

And there is so much I would like to tell you. To warn you about...Things I wish you would do differently. But I cannot.

WHY NOT?!

Because. I was you. And when I was *you*, I never told you anything.

THAT MAKES *NO* SENSE!

It does. In its own way. You will see.

WHERE ARE YOU GOING?!

One day, very soon, you will see for yourself. Goodbye, Randall.

ZAP

It is all a pattern. Things happen that must happen. We cannot *change* this pattern. As much as we might like to, we cannot alter our paths.

All we can do is *regret.*

COLONEL? ARE YOU ALL RIGHT?

COLONEL? ARE YOU ALL RIGHT?

YOU LOOK LIKE YOU'VE SEEN A *GHOST.*

THE END

# THE *REAL* SECRET ORIGINS OF BLACK HAMMER

It's a bit surreal to be writing an afterword for *Black Hammer* in late 2016 because this story has been with me for a long time and existed in a few different incarnations before becoming the version you just read. I originally conceived the idea for *Black Hammer* back in 2007 or 2008. At that time, I was still working on my debut graphic novel, *Essex County*, for Top Shelf. I was also still working a day job (or night job, as it were) as a line cook here in Toronto. At the time, I never dreamed I could actually make a full-time career out of making comics, and I certainly never thought I would ever write mainstream superhero comics for DC or Marvel.

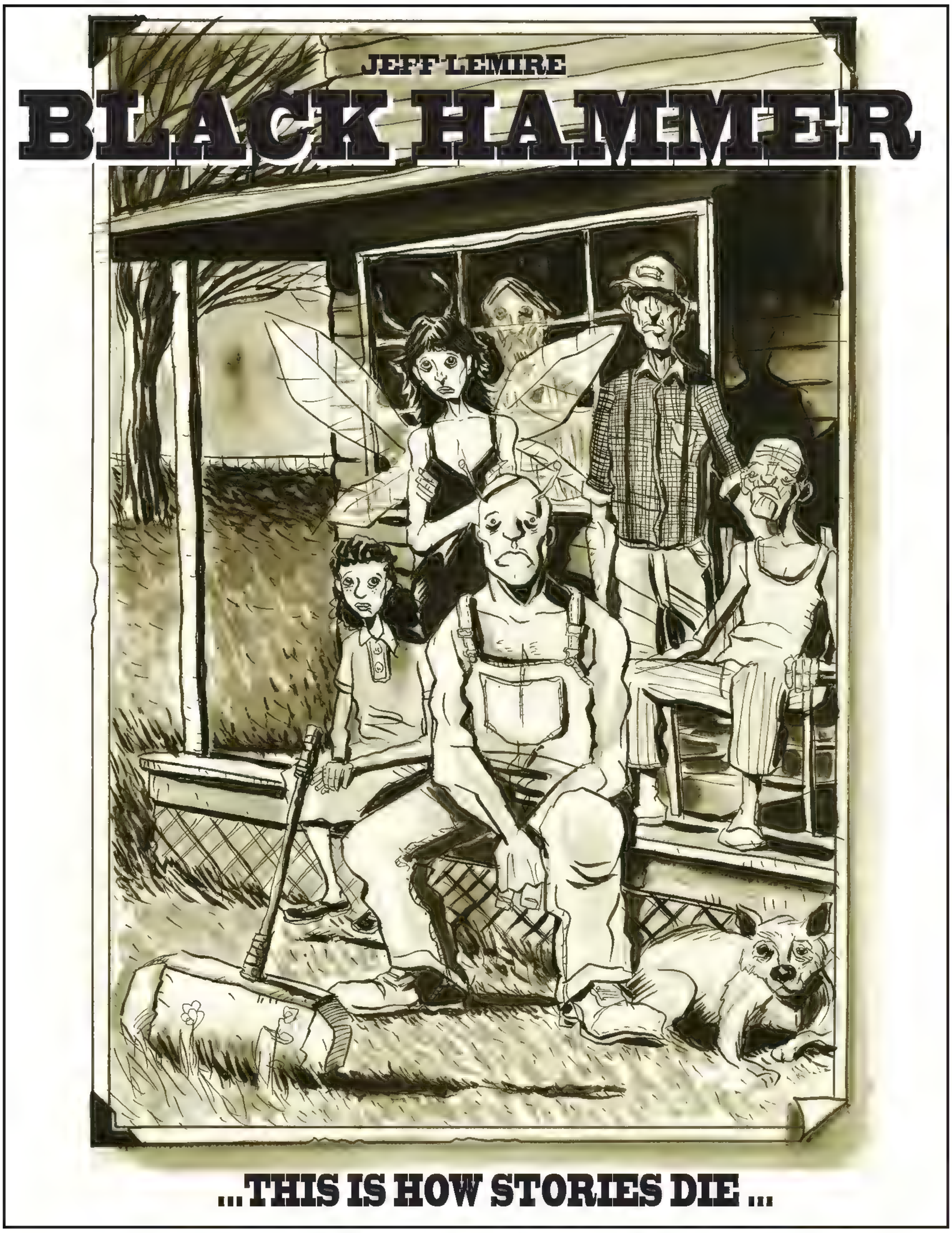
So, it was under this assumption—that I would never get a chance to write "real" superhero comics—that I started working on *Black Hammer*. It would be my version of superheroes, filtered through everything I liked to do—grounded human stories about family and small towns. Basically, it would be *Essex County* meets superheroes.

I love superheroes. I loved them as a kid. I loved them back in 2007 when I was first working on *Black Hammer*, and I love them now. At the time, when I was working in indie comics, this wasn't really a cool thing to say. Indie cartoonists were supposed to rebel against those *evil, mainstream corporate comics*. Whatever. I just love comics. All comics. Like with any genre, there are good superhero comics and bad ones. Just like there are good indie comics and bad ones. So with *Black Hammer*, I set out to create a love letter to all the superhero comics I loved, but to ground it in the indie sensibilities of the work I was making then.

At the time, I was going to write *and* draw *Black Hammer* myself. One of my copublishers at Top Shelf, Brett Warnock, was friendly with many of the folks in his local Portland comics community, including Diana Schutz, an editor at Dark Horse. Brett mentioned that Diana really liked *Essex County* and suggested I talk to her about potential projects. I pitched *Black Hammer* to Diana and her then–assistant editor Brendan Wright, and they accepted it! I was ecstatic. *Black Hammer* was going to be my next project after *Essex*.

That didn't happen. Instead, a little boy with antlers kept popping up in my sketchbooks, and the next thing I knew I was writing and drawing forty issues of the monthly comic *Sweet Tooth* at DC/Vertigo. And somewhere in there I also started writing "real" superhero comics for DC.

So, *Black Hammer* got sort of pushed to the side. I figured I would get back to it eventually. But I never really did until 2014, when the time was finally right. At that point I had been writing for DC for five or six years and had a completely different perspective of superheroes . . . but I still




loved them. And I also knew I couldn't draw the book myself if I ever wanted to actually get it off the ground. I was busy drawing other projects. And while I can juggle multiple writing assignments, drawing is extremely labor intensive, and I can only ever draw one book at a time. So drawing it wasn't possible. This led me to the great Dean Ormston.

I had fallen in love with Dean's work years back when he was doing a series called *Books of Magick: Life during Wartime* for Vertigo. And I met Dean in 2011 at the Thought Bubble comics

festival in Leeds, UK, near his hometown of Barnsley. I hit it off with Dean right away and expressed my love of his work. We talked about working together at some point. I tried to get Dean hired to do some issues of *Animal Man* at DC with me, but it never panned out. So, when I committed to the idea of writing *Black Hammer* for another artist, I immediately circled back to Dean.

What made Dean perfect for *Black Hammer* was that his art looked nothing like mainstream superhero comics. And I knew that if *Black Hammer* were drawn in a traditional superhero style, it would be at risk of becoming just another superhero book. I wanted it to stand outside of superhero comics and comment on them, not become one of them. So Dean's idiosyncratic style seemed perfect to me. And now that you have read the first six issues of *Black Hammer*, I think you'll agree that I was right. He is perfect for this story. Now I can't imagine ever having done the book with anyone else. *Black Hammer* has become as much Dean's world as it is mine.

And for those who do not know, Dean has had to work through a series of challenges of his own to get this book into your hands. A few weeks after completing work on the first issues, Dean suffered from a brain hemorrhage. Basically, he had a stroke. It took Dean months to recover, with the right side of his body, including his drawing hand, partially paralyzed. After lots of hard work and rehab, Dean is now almost fully recovered and almost back to his regular work schedule. All of this is an incredible testament to Dean's work ethic, his passion for *Black Hammer*, and the fact that he is one of the kindest, most talented, and all around one of the most inspiring and amazing people I've ever had the fortune to work with and call a friend.

When getting this current incarnation of *Black Hammer* off the ground, I went back to Dark Horse. They had shown commitment to my work and to the story long before I was an established name in the industry, so I felt like there was no other place for *Black Hammer* to be. In the years between my original 2008 pitch and the reworking of *Black Hammer*, Diana had left Dark Horse, but Brendan was still there. So Brendan helped get this book off the ground and assembled the incredible creative team Dean and I are lucky enough to work with, letterer Todd Klein and colorist Dave Stewart.

TODD KLEIN!!!!! The 2007 Jeff would *freak out* if he knew he was ever going to be able to work with Todd Klein. I mean, he is a *legend*. He lettered *Sandman*, for god's sake! And Dave Stewart is . . . Well, he is a genius. He has colored so many of my favorite comics and favorite cartoonists. I can't say enough about how much these two talented gentlemen bring to *Black Hammer*. The book would not be what it is without them.

Since starting work on this book, Brendan also left Dark Horse, but his presence remains. And now we are aided by the awesome editorial team of Daniel Chabon and Cardner Clark.

So, this is the secret origin of *Black Hammer*. It's been a long road from 2007 to now, but I could not be more proud of the book.

Oh, one more thing. On the following pages you will see preliminary artwork from Dean and me. Among this material are some of my drawings and character designs from that original 2008 pitch. As part of that pitch I created a mock "encyclopedia" of the characters. I did this in the style of the old DC Comics *Who's Who* series that I loved so much as a kid. (*Hey, Gerard Way, I did this eight years before you did the same thing with* Young Animal*, so there! Just kidding . . . Love* Young Animal.) I even tried to draw each entry in the art style of one of my favorite artists.

But I do want to add a little disclaimer: many of the character descriptions and histories are from an earlier version of the story and no longer resemble the versions that exist today. So in other words, these character designs and histories are not canon.

There are a few fun things to note here. Back in 2008 the character of Abraham Slam was originally going to be much older. Abe was going to be in his eighties or nineties. And there was another cast member called "the Farmer" who was going to be a riff on a Joe Kubert–style DC war hero. When I started working on the series again in 2014 I combined these two characters into the version of Abe that exists today. You'll also notice a couple of other characters, "Time Boy" and "the Horseless Rider," who were riffs on Jack Kirby's Fourth World and Jim Aparo's Spectre. These two characters have not made their way into the pages of *Black Hammer*. At least, not yet.

Anyway, despite being out of date, these early designs and drawings are a part of *Black Hammer*'s history, and I hope you enjoy them. And thanks again for reading *Black Hammer*. I hope you stick around, because the story is just getting started.

Jeff Lemire
Toronto, Canada
November 2016

## PERSONAL DATA

*Alter Ego:* Gail Garnett
*Occupation:* Elementary school student
*Marital Status*: Single
*Known Relatives:* Mary and Billy Garnett (parents, deceased)
*Base of Operations*: Spiral City
*First Appearance:* CAPTAIN GOLDEN ADVENTURES #18
*Height*: 5'1" *Weight:* 87 lbs.
*Eyes*: Green *Hair*: Brown

## HISTORY

When her parents were killed in an auto accident, Gail Garnett was placed in the Spiral City Orphanage. There she met young Tommy O'Toole, another orphan. The two became quick friends in the often harsh environment of the orphanage.

They ran away together one rainy night, and took refuge in an abandoned subway station. There they found a secret doorway which led them to the lair of the mighty wizard Zafram. With his dying breath, Zafram showered his magical Golden Rays upon the two children, and they soon discovered they could transform into powerful beings by saying his name.

Taking on the names Golden Gail and Captain Golden, the two had many adventures protecting Spiral City. The Golden family soon grew to include Uncle Golden, Cousin Golden, and Captain Golden Jr.

When the mad scientist Dr. Sherlock Frankenstein attacked Spiral City with a giant robot, the entire Golden family was killed except for Gail.

Afterward she found she was trapped in her Golden form and could no longer return to normal. As a result Gail will never age.

## POWERS & WEAPONS

Upon speaking the wizard Zafram's name Gail is endowed with super-strength, flight, and invulnerability. She is also a gifted gymnast and hand-to-hand fighter.

*Art by Jeff Lemire after C. C. Beck*

# BARBALIEN

## WARLORD FROM MARS

### PERSONAL DATA

*Alter Ego:* Markkon Markken
*Occupation:* None
*Marital Status*: Widowed
*Known Relatives:* Syra (wife, deceased)
*Group Affiliation*: The Un-Squad
*Base of Operations*: Lost Lands of Earth
*First Appearance:* BARBALIEN, WARLORD OF MARS #1
*Height*: 6'5" *Weight:* 300 lbs.
*Eyes*: Green *Hair*: None

### HISTORY

When his home world of Mars became overrun by tyranny and war, gentle scientist Markkon Markken took his wife Syra and left for Earth in an experimental rocket ship. In transit, a Martian fighter squad damaged the vessel, killing Syra. Markkon managed to escape with his life. However, as his spaceship entered Earth's atmosphere, it broke a dimensional barrier and Markkon landed in an alternate plane of reality. This barren version of Earth called the Lost Lands was ruled by an evil sorcerer named Daggus. Ironically, Markkon had landed in a world just like the one he had run from. Enraged by the death of Syra, and the terrible conditions of the Lost Lands, Markkon dubbed himself Barbalien, Warlord of Mars, and began to strike back against the dark forces of Daggus. The people of the Lost Lands soon rallied around Barbalien's uprising. Eventually Barbalien even found love again with the beautiful Princess Gandra. They had a son, named Murkkon. Their love affair however was cut short when he learned that Gandra was really an agent of Daggus. She took Murkkon and returned to Daggus's castle. Here, Daggus used his black magic to rapidly age Murkkon, finally creating a warrior who could match Barbalien. In a final climactic battle, Barbalien stormed Daggus's castle and faced his own son in battle. Barbalien was forced to kill Murkkon, and then killed Daggus as well. With the people of Lost Earth free, he left for space again, determined to return to Mars and free it as he had Earth. Upon returning to his home world, Barbalien found that the entire population had been wiped out by one devasting final war. He was now the sole survivor of Mars.

Barbalien returned to Earth, this time landing in the proper dimension. Here he joined the superhero team the Un-Squad for a time and became one of Earth's most powerful and popular superheroes.

### POWERS & WEAPONS

Barbalien's Martian biology gives him super strength, speed, and agility. He is also able to jump huge distances. He is able to hold his breath for hours at a time, and his skin is invulnerable to harm. In addition to his superhuman abilities, Barbalien is also an expert at all forms of hand-to-hand combat, and a master swordsman and marksman.

*Art by Jeff Lemire after John Buscema*

# ABRAHAM SLAM

## PERSONAL DATA

*Alter Ego:* Abraham Ezekiel Slam
*Occupation:* Crime buster
*Marital Status*: Widowed
*Known Relatives:* Maureen Slam (wife, deceased)
*Base of Operations*: Spiral City
*First Appearance:* MORE FUN ACTION #1
*Height*: 5'9" *Weight:* 150 lbs.
*Eyes*: Brown *Hair*: Brown

## HISTORY

Abraham Ezekiel Slam was born to a poor family in the ghettos of Spiral City at the dawn of the century.
Always a feeble boy, Abe often stayed inside his parents' tenement apartment to avoid the often cruel tauntings of the other neighborhood children.
When the boy gangs in the ghetto began to threaten local shop owners, including his father's taxidermy shop, Abe was forced to step in. The puny boy was beaten to within an inch of his life. Afterward, Abe dedicated his young self to getting stronger and learning to protect himself. As he hit his teenage years Abe sprouted up and before long, his robust frame was the envy of the local boys. Abe became a star athlete and pugilist. Attending Spiral City University, he set new records for yards rushed and touchdowns in a single season by a college running back.
After his school years, Abe married Maureen Stein, the girl next door, and moved into a small apartment not unlike the one he grew up in. Disgusted by the crime and local gangs, Abe took it upon himself to fight back. Donning a flamboyant costume and mask, Abe became one of the very first masked avengers in the prewar days. As America rushed off to war, Abe joined the fight abroad, leading a unit of costumed heroes known as the Super All-Stars against Nazi forces. After the war, a new generation of heroes began to emerge in postwar America. Abe decided to retire from superheroics. He opened a tiny butcher shop in Spiral City and worked happily for years. But Abe grew restless, and came out of retirement. Well into his fifties, Abe joined the young new generation of heroes, and shared many adventures with the likes of the Farmer, Investi-Gator, the Prawn, Ms. Metallurgy, and Ghost Spy.
When Maureen passed away from cancer in the '70s, Abe finally hung up the mask for good, leaving behind an incredible legacy.

## POWERS & WEAPONS

Though he has no superpowers, Abe Slam was trained well as a fighter and gymnast. He was remarkably strong and tough as well as agile.
Abe was a gifted athlete and never backed down from a fight.

*Art by Jeff Lemire after Al Camy*

# MADAME DRAGONFLY

## PERSONAL DATA

*Alter Ego:* Unknown
*Occupation:* Fortune Teller
*Marital Status*: Unknown
*Known Relatives:* None
*Base of Operations*: Dead Dog Swamps, Louisiana
*First Appearance:* MANSION OF THE MACABRE #126
*Height*: 5'9" *Weight:* 110 lbs.
*Eyes*: Green *Hair*: Black

## HISTORY

Very little is known about the origins of the mysterious occult figure and part-time fortune teller known as Madame Dragonfly. She resides in a small cabin deep in the swamps of Dead Dog, Louisiana. Early in her career, Madame Dragonfly was said to have engaged in a romantic relationship with the monster known as Muck Thing. This, however, has never been proven. Sometime after Muck Thing's apparent death, Madame Dragonfly popped up in New York's Greenwich Village. Here she spent a short period of time acting as a fortune-teller, and amateur stage magician. Recently she has returned to the swamps and can be found lending her special talents in the arcane arts to those in distress.

For a short time Madame Dragonfly was associated with the group of mystical beings known as the Covenant, but more recently seems to work alone. She has shown a knack for "ghost hunting" and has been called upon from time to time to help the superhero community with super-natural crises.

She has been seen with the once-missing space hero Col. Weird on more than one occasion.

## POWERS & WEAPONS

Madame Dragonfly is in possession of a number of powerful occult artifacts which lend her a variety of magical abilities. Moreover Madame Dragonfly has strong telekinetic and psychic abilities on her own. She can also produce incredibly powerful illusions.

*Art by Jeff Lemire after Mike Kaluta*

# COL. WEIRD

## PERSONAL DATA

*Alter Ego:* Randel Weird
*Occupation:* Astronaut
*Marital Status:* Single
*Known Relatives:* Douglas Weird (father, deceased), Mary Weird (mother)
*Group Affiliation:* None
*Base of Operations:* Moonbase 12
*First Appearance:* FUTURE TALES #17
*Height:* 6'0" *Weight:* 175 lbs.
*Eyes:* Blue *Hair:* Blond

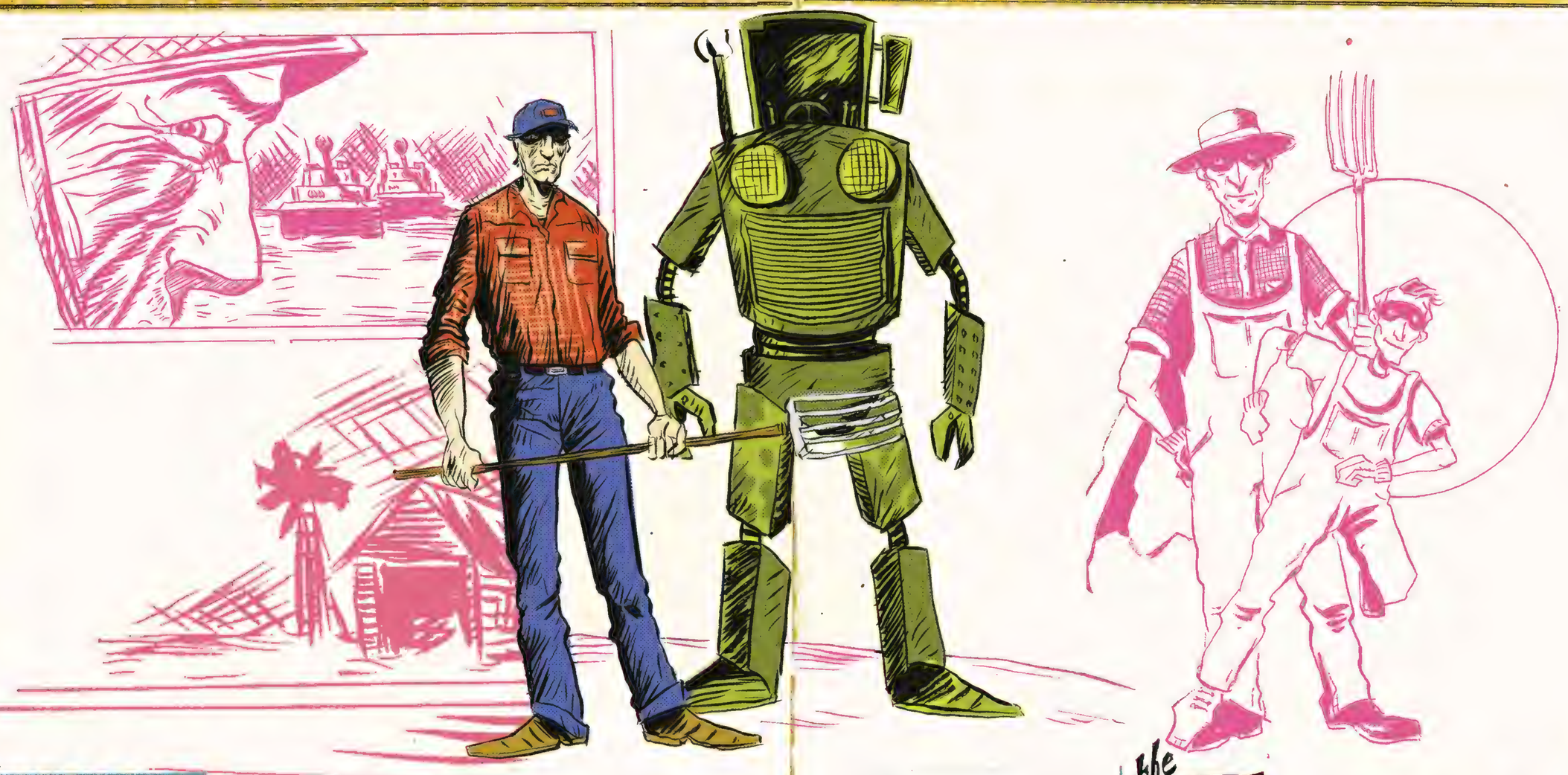
## HISTORY

At the dawn of the Space Age, US test pilot Col. Weird volunteered for NASA's first manned flight to the stars. There Weird helped establish and protect Earth's first moon base. In space, Col. Weird embarked on a number of astonishing interstellar adventures. Eventually Weird returned home, a hero. In the early 1970s Weird again volunteered for a deep space mission, this time the rescue mission of a manned crew headed to Mars who had lost contact with Earth. As Weird approached the vessel he encountered something and he too disappeared. He was not seen or heard from for five years until he suddenly reappeared on Earth in the late '70s. He had only a limited understanding of what happened to him, or where he had been all those years. Nonetheless, Weird was changed. He now possessed a number of extranormal abilities and senses, all apparently derived from somewhere he called the Anti-Zone. As time passed however, Weird began to lose his grip on reality, and his sanity slowly faded with it. He now appears only sporadically in a distant, ghost-like state, a shadow of his former self.

## POWERS & WEAPONS

Though the full extent of Weird's powers is unknown, he can apparently teleport incredible distances, phase through solid objects, and tap into something called Anti-Energy which has incredible and destructive properties. In addition, Weird's NASA and Air Force training make him an excellent hand-to-hand combatant and an accomplished pilot.

*Art by Jeff Lemire after Murphy Anderson*



# the FARMER and TRACTOR

## PERSONAL DATA

*Alter Ego:* Henry Lacroix
*Occupation:* Farmer, soldier, adventurer
*Marital Status*: Single
*Known Relatives:* Hubert Lacroix (father, deceased), Mabel Lacroix (mother, deceased)
*Group Affiliation*: The Unbelongables
*Base of Operations*: Northern California
*First Appearance:* COMBAT TALES #26
*Height*: 6'0" *Weight:* 175 lbs.
*Eyes*: Blue *Hair*: Gray

## HISTORY

Born on a small unassuming ranch in northern California, Henry Lacroix seemed like just an average boy. His father Hubert, however, saw something special in Henry and helped to foster his love of math and science. Before long Henry was considered a prodigy. When the boom of costumed adventurers and masked crime busters hit the States in the days preceding WWII, Hubert decided to join in on the action. He took on the guise of the masked hero known as the Farmer (see the Farmer I).

Relying mainly on his fists and his trusty pitchfork to fight injustice in the rural communities of the American heartland, Hubert often found himself in over his head. Before long Hubert enlisted the help of his gifted son to help invent a number of ingenious gadgets to aid his cause.

Henry soon put on a mask himself and often joined his father as his sidekick Farmboy. The Farmer and Farmboy had a number of high-profile adventures leading up to the war. They often joined Spiral City's ace crime buster, Abraham Slam (see Abraham Slam), to help take down organized-crime rings in that city.

On a routine patrol one night, the Farmer and Farmboy were ambushed by their archfoe, the Cityslicker. Hubert was mortally wounded and died in young Henry's arms.

As WWII approached, Henry enlisted in the armed forces, just like millions of other American boys. He soon came to epitomize the fighting man and spirit.

Henry soon found himself donning his father's mantle, becoming the Fighting Farmer.

As the Fighting Farmer, Henry led a group of soldiers onto the beaches of Normandy on D-day, and helped secure the Allied victory.

After the war Henry retired to the family farm and lived a quiet life for some time. But when a new generation of costumed science heroes emerged in the postwar world, a restless Henry once again put on his mask, this time calling himself only the Farmer, thus fully paying tribute to his father's legacy.

The Farmer became one of the most respected superheroes in the world.

Around that time, Henry also invented the giant Tractor which could transform into a combat-ready robot.

Always putting his allegiance to his country before his superheroics, the Farmer and Tractor were a key part of America's offensive in Vietnam.

Recently Henry has led a new group of young wayward heroes known as the Unbelongables. The costumed unit fought crime in Spiral City for a short time, but the Farmer soon disbanded the unwieldy group and has mostly fought alone since.

## POWERS & WEAPONS

Henry Lacroix posseses no superhuman powers but is an exceptional hand-to-hand combatant. He is a skilled marksman, and well versed in many close- and long-range weapons.

Tractor, Henry's amazing fighting robot, is superstrong and equipped with state-of-the-art weaponry and guidance systems.

On occasion Henry still uses his father's trusty pitchfork to fight crime.

*Art by Jeff Lemire after Joe Kubert*

## PERSONAL DATA

*Alter Ego:* Formerly Jacob Tex
*Occupation:* Formerly gambler
*Marital Status*: Single
*Known Relatives:* None
*Base of Operations*: Unknown
*First Appearance:* THE HORSELESS RIDER #1
*Height*: 6'2" *Weight:* 185 lbs.
*Eyes*: White *Hair*: White

## HISTORY

After murdering and cheating his way across the Old West, gambler Jacob Tex was killed in a drunken saloon brawl and enlisted by God to exact vengeance on the evil men of the Wild West as the haunting "Specter of the Prairies," the Horseless Rider.

In cases where some supernatural or physical threat is involved, the Horseless Rider has been known to appear in the present day, particularly in Spiral City, where he shares an uneasy alliance with many superheroes.

## POWERS & WEAPONS

The Horseless Rider's abilities defy all attempts at classification. He seems to be able to appear and vanish at will. At times he has shown the ability to control supernatural energy. He can become intangible, and is impervious to harm.

He often uses his mystical six-shooters to exact vengeance.

*Art by Jeff Lemire after Jim Aparo*

## PERSONAL DATA

*Alter Ego:* None
*Occupation:* None
*Marital Status*: Single
*Known Relatives:* The High God (father)
*Base of Operations*: None
*First Appearance:* YOUNG GODS #1
*Height*: 5'9" *Weight:* 150 lbs.
*Eyes*: Blue *Hair*: Black

## HISTORY

One of the powerful Young Gods of New Pantheon (see Young Gods), Time Boy is a time-hopping adventurer and space champion. His father is the powerful High God (see High God), and is often sent as New Pantheon's ambassador on Earth.

The cosmic pooch named Warpie is his loyal pet and companion.

## POWERS & WEAPONS

Time Boy flies at tremendous speeds and can traverse space and time freely. He can also project blasts of cosmic energy.

*Art by Jeff Lemire after Jack Kirby*

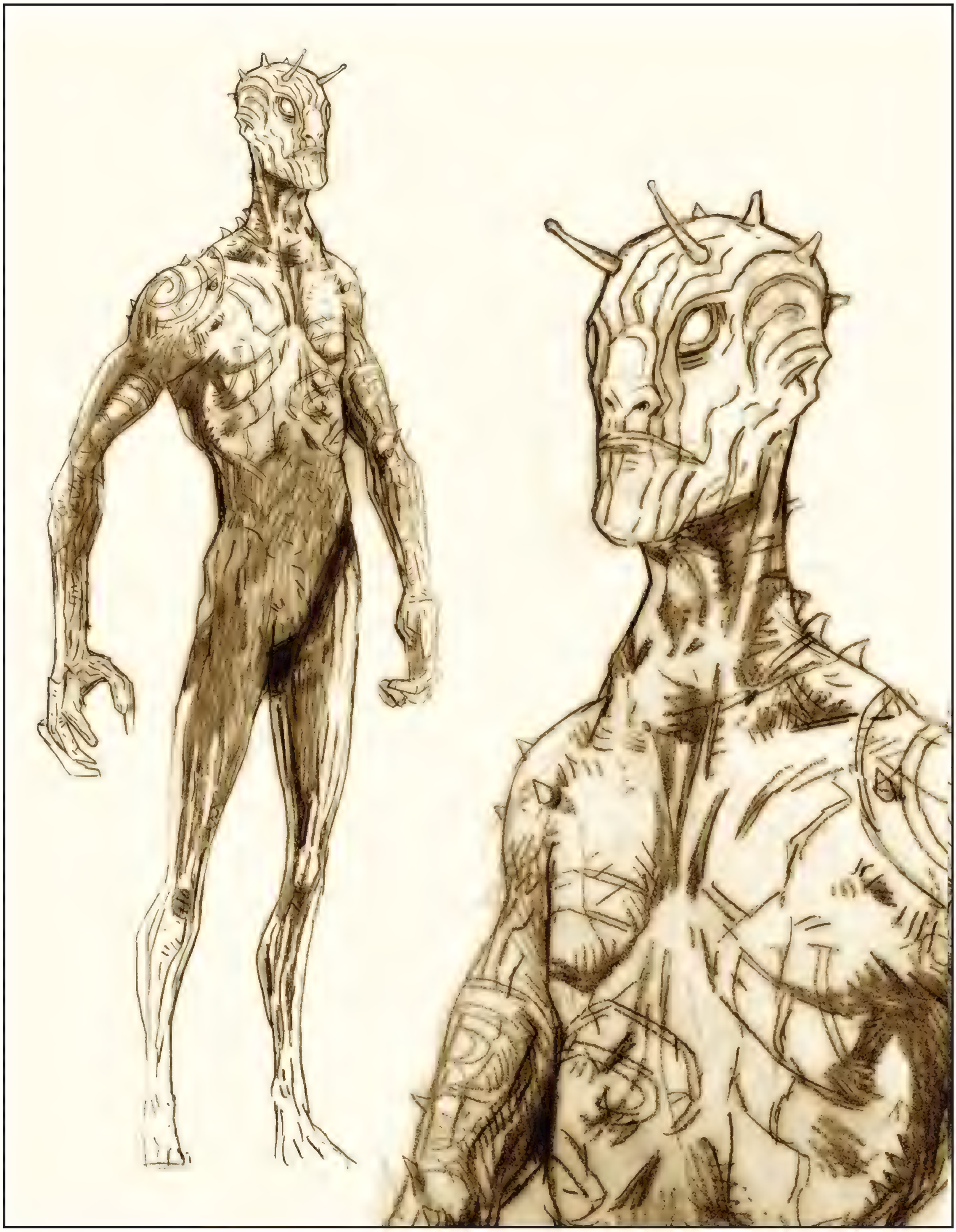
# BLACK HAMMER™

## SKETCHBOOK

### NOTES BY DEAN ORMSTON

Jeff's original sketches had Gail quite a bit older, but by the time he had written the first issue, Gail was a middle-aged woman stuck in the body of a nine-year-old girl, and a very moody, pissed-off girl indeed. These sketches were done for issue #2, where we get to see Golden Gail's origin and superhero costume, and the final choice was quite similar to Jeff's sketch but adapted to suit a young girl.

The Abraham Slam sketches were inspired by many Golden Age heroes of comics and film. He's part Captain America, part Batman, and an all-American hero. Although we don't get to see him in costume that much, these sketches were the first ones that I did of Abe. The old and weary Abe we see in the present-day world of *Black Hammer* was actually developed on the first three pages I drew for the book. He grew out of the pages. Abe's costume changes slightly with each era.



Jeff had quite a strong design for Barbalien. I wanted to keep the same body shape, but to suit the way I draw, I made him almost like a walking tree with heavily lined skin. I also had a bit of inspiration from David Bowie's portrayal of an alien in the movie *The Man Who Fell to Earth*. He has odd-shaped pupils . . . and where are his sex organs?

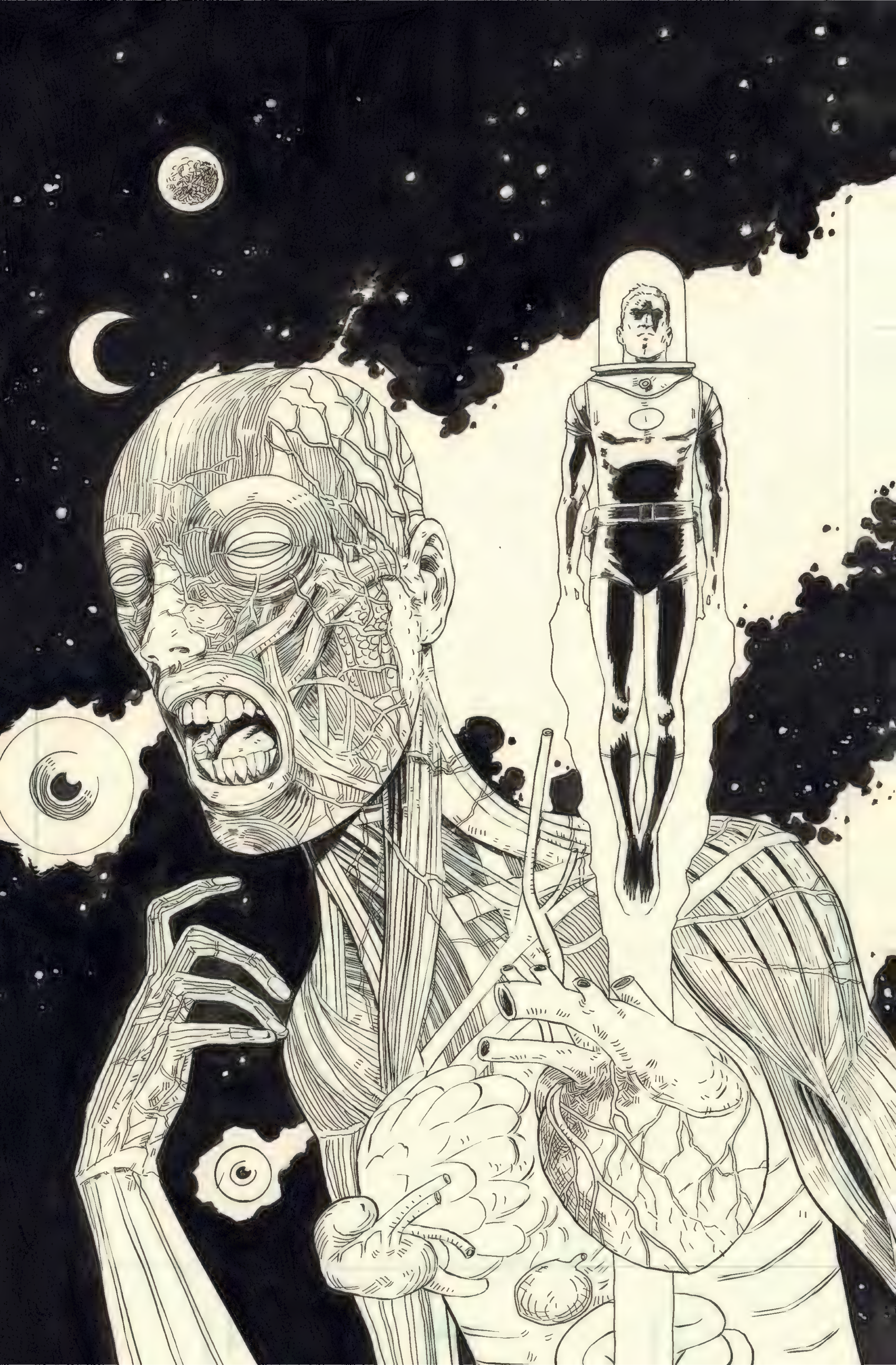
The sketch of the young and sound-of-mind Colonel Weird was inspired by 1950s sci-fi movies and Adam Strange. As you can see from Jeff's original sketches (page 371), both versions of Weird we get to see in *Black Hammer* are quite close to his original designs; there are just a few changes here and there to suit my way of drawing.

Sitting at the side of my desk is an old tin-plate toy Robby the Robot from *Forbidden Planet*. This was the inspiration for Talky-Walky: pure 1950s robot.

I always seem to be happiest drawing images that are unsettling and creepy. I took the opportunity and the freedom I had been given to make Madame Dragonfly as shadowy as possible—so these early sketches are a departure from Jeff's original designs. The old witch who passes on the burden of the cabin is my love letter to the old witches from EC comics and Graham Ingels.

*This page:* Cover sketches by Dustin Nguyen for his SDCC variant.
*Facing page:* The final cover by Dustin.

The following pages contain high res scans of Dean's original cover art for the first two arcs of *Black Hammer*.



ORMSTON

ALL LETTERING AND ESSENTIAL ART MUST FALL WITHIN THIS SOLID "LIVE AREA" BOX. THIS IS THE BORDER FOR A STANDARD, NON-BLEED COMIC BOOK PAGE.

DARK HORSE COMICS

# BLACK HAMMER

ALL LETTERING AND ESSENTIAL ART MUST FALL WITHIN THIS SOLID "LIVE AREA" BOX. THIS IS THE BORDER FOR A STANDARD, NON BLEED COMIC BOOK PAGE.

The following pages contain high res scans of Dean's original interior line art for some of the early issues of *Black Hammer* with the lettering overlays added.

BOO HOO. WE'RE COMING WITH YOU.

FINE. AND ***YOU*** JUST MAKE SURE YOU KEEP THE BARN DOOR ***CLOSED*** WHILE I'M GONE, WALKY TALKY. LAST THING WE NEED IS SOMEONE SEEING YOU!

YES, ABRAHAM. I KNOW THE DRILL.

PUT YOUR SEATBELT ON, GAIL.

IS THAT A JOKE?

YOU KNOW ABE DOESN'T HAVE A SENSE OF HUMOR, GAIL.

KAW!

SHHH...CALM YOURSELF.

THEY'RE GOING TO TOWN. I'LL NEED TO ***CONCENTRATE,*** AND I DON'T NEED YOU SQUAWKING IN MY EAR.

I DON'T ACTUALLY MISS HOW THINGS WERE. I WAS A ***DIFFERENT PERSON*** THEN.

"I MEAN, REALLY, THE WHOLE THING WAS KIND OF SILLY, WASN'T IT? SOMETIMES I WONDER IF IT WAS REAL AT ALL, OR JUST SOME ***COLLECTIVE DREAM*** WE ALL WOKE UP FROM."

NO, I DON'T MISS OUR ***OLD LIFE***, GAIL. WHAT I DO MISS IS THE ***FREEDOM.***

I MISS BEING ABLE TO ***LEAVE.*** I MISS THE ***REST OF THE WORLD.***

I MISS HAVING TITS.

WE ARE WHO WE ARE NOW, GAIL. WE ***CAN'T*** CHANGE THAT. HELL KNOWS WE'VE SPENT MOST OF THESE LAST TEN YEARS TRYING.

PERSONALLY, I ALWAYS LIKED YOU BETTER LIKE ***THIS*** ANYWAY.

WHAT WOULD I DO WITHOUT YOU, BARBALIEN?

YOU'D BROOD ***ALONE.***

SPIRAL CITY. THE GOLDEN AGE.

HA HA HA HA! ROBO-KING IS THE PINNACLE OF MY UNDEAD GENIUS! SPIRAL CITY WILL FINALLY **BELONG** TO DOCTOR SHERLOCK FRANKENSTEIN!

OH NO! MY ARCHENEMY **DOCTOR SHERLOCK FRANKENSTEIN** IS ATTACKING THE CITY AGAIN!

I--I SHOULD SAY THE MAGIC WORD... I SHOULD TRANSFORM INTO **GOLDEN GAIL** AND USE MY POWERS TO STOP THAT GHOUL ONCE AND FOR ALL, BUT I JUST **CAN'T!**

♩♪♫♬

RMMMMBBLLLE

RAIN'S COMING, GIRL. GOOD THING, TOO. WHEAT NEEDS IT.

ABRAHAM! PHONE FOR YOU!

IT'S THE SCHOOL AGAIN. GAIL'S IN TROUBLE.

SHIT.

DEAN ORMSTON

I'M SORRY I'M LATE. THAT RAIN REALLY *IS* COMING DOWN OUT THERE.

NOW THEN... MS. ROUNDTREE, TELL ME WHAT WE CAN DO TO WORK WITH YOU TO GET GAIL BACK ON TRACK?

MRS. SLAMSTEIN, AS I WAS TELLING YOUR FATHER, I--WELL, I'M AFRAID IT'S GONE TOO *FAR* FOR THAT. I THINK WE NEED TO CALL CHILD SERVICES.

OH, I DON'T THINK THAT IS NECESSARY...

ԿՁՀՄԿ ՔՔՄՂՀ ԿԻՄԿԿ ՀՀՔՄՀՀ

OF COURSE...GAIL IS AN IDEAL STUDENT. WE ARE SO LUCKY TO HAVE HER HERE AT ST. MARKS. I'M GLAD YOU AND YOUR FATHER COULD STOP BY SO I COULD TELL YOU HOW ***WONDERFULLY*** SHE'S DOING, MRS. SLAMSTEIN.

for the U.S. ARMY ENLIST NOW
RECRUIT
WAR BOND
I'M SORRY, MR. SLAMKOWSKI, BUT YOU ARE UNFIT FOR SERVICE.
B-BUT I GOTTA GET OVERSEAS AND HELP TAKE IT TO THOSE FILTHY NAZIS, DOC! PLEASE! I MAY BE SKINNY, BUT I CAN *FIGHT* AS GOOD AS ANYONE! I JUST *KNOW* I CAN!
I ADMIRE YOUR GUMPTION, SON, BUT YOU DIDN'T PASS A *SINGLE* ELEMENT OF THE PHYSICAL. YOU'RE NEAR-SIGHTED, AS *THIN* AS A TOOTHPICK, AND YOUR LUNGS ARE WEAK. MAYBE YOU CAN FIND A WAY TO HELP UNCLE SAM HERE AT HOME, HMM?
WHAT'S THE MATTER, PIPSQUEAK? DID YA STRIKE OUT WITH THE NURSE?
HA!
I-I CAN'T BELIEVE THE ARMY WOULDN'T TAKE ME. I'VE ALREADY BEEN TURNED DOWN BY THE NAVY *AND* AIR FORCE. ALL I WANNA DO IS GET TO EUROPE AND FIGHT.
WHY SO GLUM, CHUM?
HUH? AW, SORRY, MISTER... I JUST WANNA BE ALONE.
THE ARMY WON'T TAKE ME. I'M ABOUT AS *USELESS* AS IT GETS.
WELL, IT SOUNDS TO ME LIKE YOU'VE ALREADY *GIVEN UP* THERE, BOY. YOU REALLY WANNA FIGHT, YOU GOTTA LEARN HOW TO TAKE A FEW PUNCHES.
WHATTA *YOU* KNOW ABOUT IT?
SOCKLINGHAM BOXING GYM
I CAN TEACH YOU HOW TO FIGHT. MIGHT EVEN BE ABLE TO HELP YOU PUT A FEW *POUNDS* ON THEM CLOTHES HANGERS YOU CALL SHOULDERS.
RUSED
PUNCH SOCKLINGHAM.
ABRAHAM SLAMKOWSKI. REAL NICE TO *MEET'CHA.* CAN YOU REALLY HELP ME GET IN SHAPE? TEACH ME TO FIGHT?
THAT DEPENDS... YOU READY TO PUT IN THE HARD WORK, ABE?

FORKS ON THE OTHER SIDE, ABRAHAM! HOW MANY TIMES MUST I TELL YOU?!

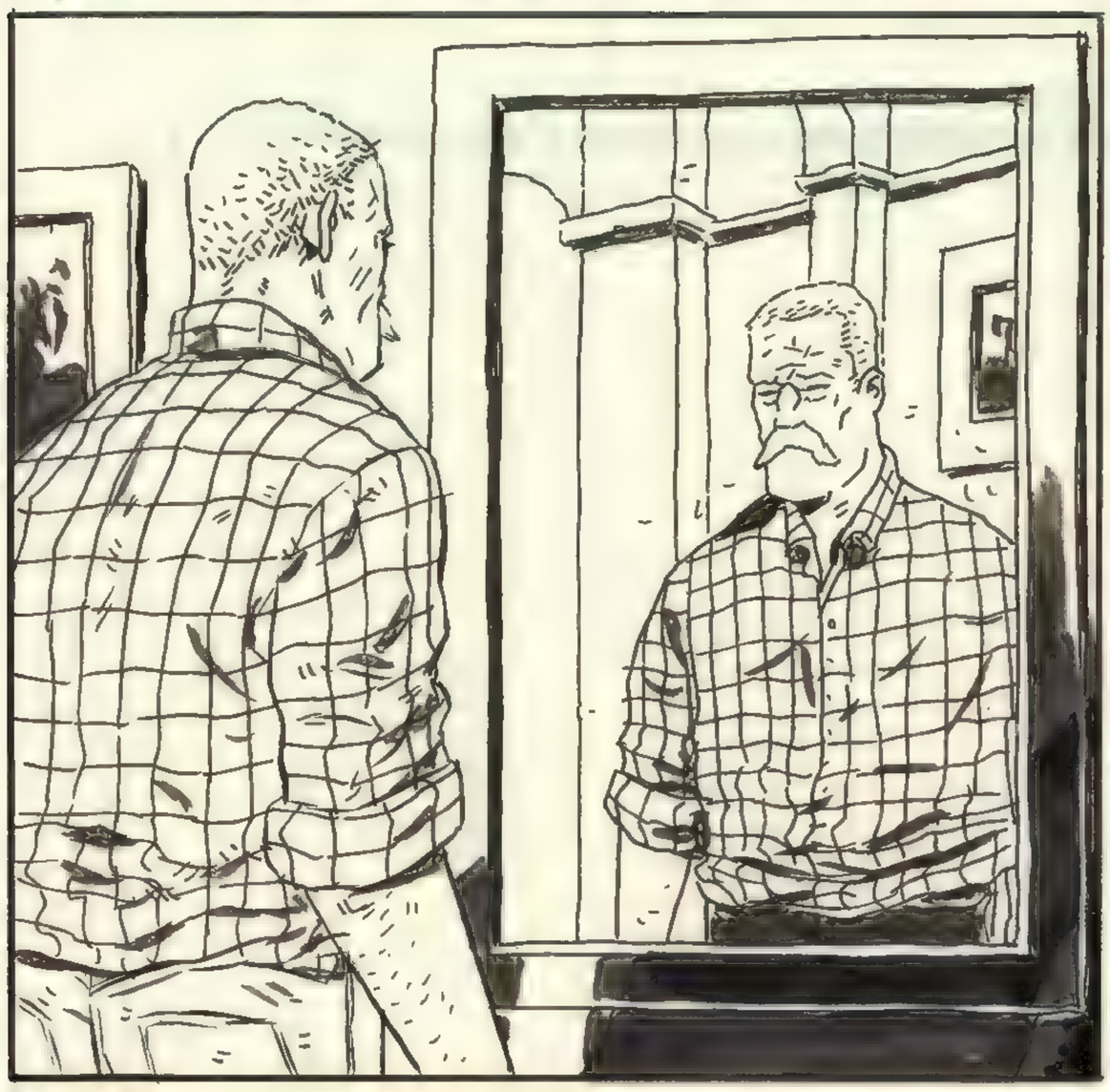
RIGHT--RIGHT, GOT IT. LOOK, YOU SHOULD GET MOVING OUT TO THE ***BARN.*** TAMMY WILL BE HERE SOON.

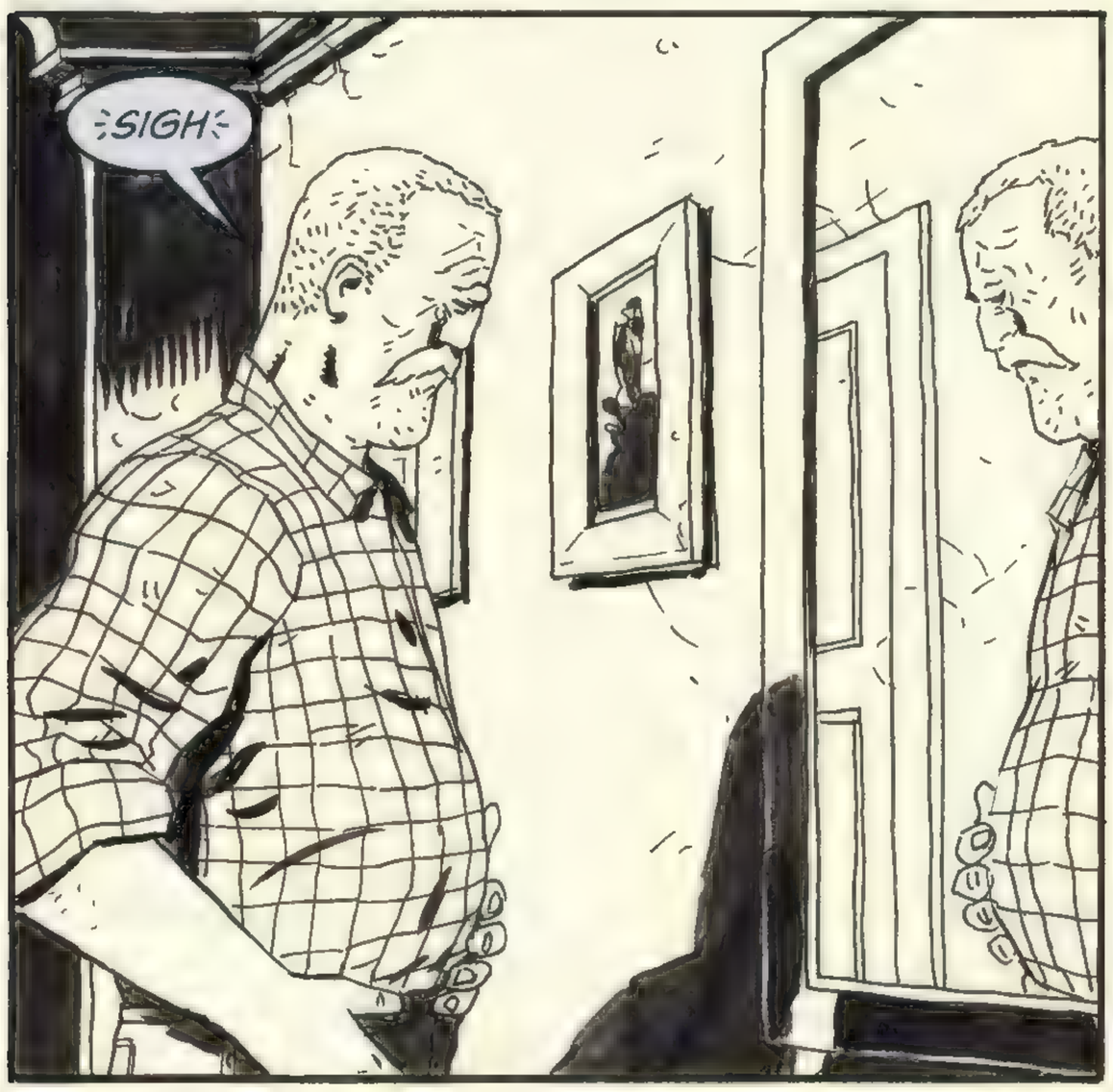
THIS IS SO DEMEANING. I COOK THE DINNER AND THEN I HAVE TO GO HIDE IN THE BARN LIKE SOME... SOME ***ANIMAL.***

NOT YOU ***TOO,*** TALKY...SERIOUSLY, I'VE HAD ABOUT ENOUGH DRAMA.

BLEEP-BLOOP! I AM SORRY MASTER-- BLEEP! I AM JUST A LOYAL ROBOT. I LIVE TO SERVE MY HUMAN OVERLORDS-- BEEP-BLOOP-BEEP!

:SIGH:




SIGH

THE--THE WOMEN IN OUR VILLAGE. THEY SAID YOU COULD HELP ME...THEY SAID YOU CAN ***DO THINGS... IMPOSSIBLE THINGS.***

THESE WOMEN SHOULD KNOW BETTER THAN TO SPEAK OF ME AT ***ALL.*** BUT YOU ARE HERE NOW, SO ***SHOW*** ME. WHAT HAVE YOU BROUGHT?

IT-IT'S MY ***SON***--MY DEAR BABY BOY. HE GREW ILL AND... AND HE'S GONE. HE'S ***DEAD.***

TH-THEY SAY YOU KNOW MAGIC. THEY SAY YOU CAN BRING HIM ***BACK!*** PLEASE! I'LL DO ***ANYTHING!***

ANYTHING?

YES! HE IS MY LIFE. I--I CAN'T LIVE WITHOUT HIM! ***PLEASE!***

WHAT YOU ASK OF ME--IT IS COSTLY. YOU SEE, A LIFE MUST BE PAID FOR WITH A LIFE. AND MY LIFE HAS GONE ON FAR TOO LONG. I HAVE BEEN ***TETHERED*** TO THIS OLD CABIN...BOUND TO IT. BUT I AM OLD AND I AM TIRED. ITS MANY SECRETS WEIGH ON THESE WEAK OLD SHOULDERS.

SO I ASK YOU, YOUNG ONE, IF I GIVE YOU WHAT ***YOU WANT***-- IF I GIVE YOU A CHILD-- WILL YOU TAKE ***MY BURDEN?***

WILL YOU TAKE ***OWNERSHIP*** OF THIS OLD CABIN AND ***ALL*** THAT COMES WITH IT?

GOODBYE, EARL TRUEHEART.

TO BE CONTINUED!

# BLACK HAMMER

JEFF LEMIRE
&
DEAN ORMSTON

WITH

DAVE STEWART
&
TODD KLEIN

DARK HORSE COMICS

David Rubin

DAVID RUBIN

# BARBALIEN

## AUTOPSY!

Matt Kindt

Kindt 2016

Fred Hembeck

*Black Hammer* #1 SDCC 2017 variant cover art by Fábio Moon

**JEFF LEMIRE** is the award winning, *New York Times* bestselling author of such graphic novels as *Essex County*, *Sweet Tooth*, *Underwater Welder*, and *Roughneck*; as well as co-creator of *Descender* with Dustin Nguyen, *Black Hammer* with Dean Ormston, *Plutona* with Emi Lenox, and *Gideon Falls* with Andrea Sorrentino.

He also collaborated with celebrated musician Gord Downie on the graphic novel and album *The Secret Path*, which was made into an animated film in 2016. Jeff has won numorous awards including an Eisner Award, A Canadian Screen Award and a Juno Award. Jeff has also written extensively for both Marvel and DC Comics.

Many of his books are currently in development for film and television, including both *Descender* and *A.D. After Death* at Sony Pictures, *Essex County* at the CBC, *Gideon Falls* at Mythos Studios, and *Plutona* at Waypoint Entertainment, for which Lemire is writing the screenplay.

He lives in Toronto, Canada with his wife and son and their troublesome pug, Lola.

**DEAN ORMSTON** is a British illustrator who entered comics with *Judge Dredd Megazine* and *2000AD* before moving onto work with Vertigo on *Sandman* with Neil Gaiman, *Lucifer* and *The Unwritten* with Mike Carey, *The Eaters* with Peter Milligan, *House of Secrets* with Steven T. Seagle, *Book of Magic* and *Bodies* with Si Spencer, and *Northlanders* with Brian Wood. He is currently working on his Eisner Award winning series *Black Hammer* with Jeff Lemire.

He lives in Yorkshire, England with his wife, no kids and no troublesome pug.

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**Mysteriously banished from existence by a multiversal event, the old superheroes of Spiral City now lead simple lives on a bizarre farm from which there is no escape! But as they employ all of their super abilities to free themselves from this strange purgatory, a mysterious stranger works to bring them back into action for one last adventure!**

**Collects *Black Hammer* #1-13 and *Black Hammer: Giant Sized Annual* in a deluxe, hardcover, and oversized format with a new cover, sketchbook extras, and more!**

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**10/10** —*SNAPPOW.COM*

**5/5** —*IMPULSE GAMER*

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**5/5** —*COMICSPECTRUM.COM*

**10/10** —*COMICOSITY*

**10/10** —*COURT OF NERDS*

# SON OF ULTRON

# "THIS FAN... THIS MONSTER!"